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The Navagrahas represent the nine planets and are said to determine one's destiny- since Indian astrology is based on planetary movements. They are located near Kumbakonam and in close proximity to one another. Pay a visit to Suryanar Koil (Sun), Thingaloor (Chandra), Vaitheeswaran Koil (Mars), Thiruvenkadu (Mercury), Alangudi (Jupiter), Kanchanoor (Venus), Thirunallar (Saturn), Thirunageshwaram (Raghu) Keezh Perumpallam (Kettu) and be blessed.



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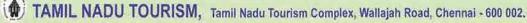
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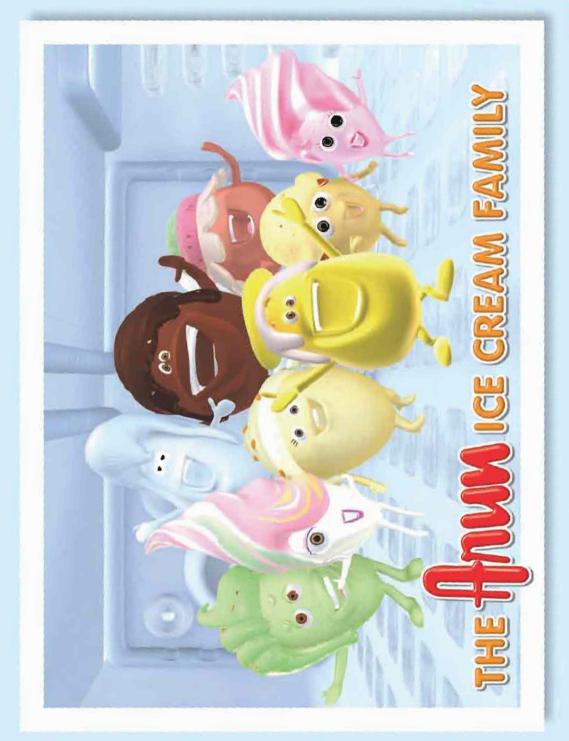
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#### Do you know what caves are?

They are naturally formed hollows in the earth, generally large enough for a man to enter.

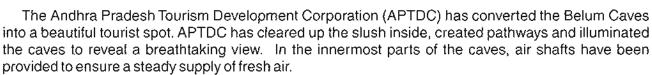
Come, let's go on a journey into the Belum Caves in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. This is the longest cave system in India located in the plains. It is over 3 km long, of which nearly a 2 km-area can now be

visited easily. A cave system is a series of connecting caves in one place.

The Belum Caves consist of long, winding passages, which open out suddenly into large spacious chambers with fresh water galleries and siphons, fantastic stalactites hanging from the roof and mysterious stalagmites standing on the floor of the cave.

When water containing carbon dioxide melts or dissolves limestone in a cave, the moisture drips down

from the ceiling of the cave, and along with the minerals in it form icicle-like tubes called stalactites. As the water drips down on the floor of the caves, the droplets form a small mound below. These are called stalagmites.



The first chamber in the cave system is called the *Simhadwaram*. It has a small but beautiful pond, a waterfall, and a fountain. This is the biggest chamber in the cave system and its roof is about 9m high.

Another chamber, called the *Mantapam*, is an underground hall richly decorated with stalactites. A passage then leads you to the chamber called *Pathalaganga*. The attraction here is a mini waterfall. The roof of the caves is as high as 20m at some places. There is a groove winding its way along the ceiling. This channel has been illuminated to enhance its beauty. A spiral staircase takes you into a chamber full of stalactites, called *Kotilingalu* or the hall of million *lingas*. These fantastic stalactites look like a miniature Himalayan range upside down! You can also see stalactites with a wonderful glow here. This is caused by the minerals present in the stalactites, which reflect light.





These million-year old caves were first mentioned in modern times by a British geologist Robert Bruce Foote, This was in 1884. Almost a century later, in 1982-83, a team of speleologists led by Daniel Gebaur, a German, explored the Belum Caves thoroughly. Speleology, you might like to know, is the scientific study of caves. In 1999, APTDC took charge of the caves to convert them into a fascinating tourist attraction. APTDC has also added soft lighting to add to the beauty of the caves.

Make sure you visit the Belum Caves. They are an unforgettable example of the underground

splendour of nature. A school excursion to the caves can be great fun and a learning experience!



Location: Near Belum village, Kolimigundla Mandal in Kurnool district. There are bus connections from nearby towns. 110 km from Kurnool via Banaganepalle, 60 km from Nandyal, 31 km from Tadipatri, 84 km from Anantapur, 270 km from Bangalore.

APTDC can arrange or advise on school excursion trips to the Caves.





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Editor Viswam Editorial Advisors Ruskin Bond Manoj Das Consultant Editor K.Ramakrishnan



#### REMEMBERING THE ELDERS

Seventy-five years ago something great happened in India which marked a turning point in our freedom struggle. Gandhiji broke the pernicious Salt Law at the sea coast of Gujarat on April 6, 1930. This came about after a 380 km march from his ashram in Sabarmati under a scorching sun. The country re-enacted the Dandi March recently to enable the world to remember him, his services to the people and the nation, and the sacrifices he made to free his motherland.

A day before the 75th anniversary march started from Gujarat, a TV crew went round gathering reactions from the common people. It was sad to notice the indifference shown to the Father of the Nation and his ideals, especially by the youth. They asked: Is it possible to practise *ahimsa* - non-violence - in the 21st century?

Here was a man who could, if he so chose, lead a comfortable life. But he traversed a different path: he chose to serve humanity and liberate his country from foreign domination. He sought to achieve this through non-violence. Every living being, from the first day of its existence on earth, loves freedom. Gandhiji demonstrated that this can be achieved by *satyagraha* or seeking Truth by peaceful means.

Our country became free less than sixty years ago. Have the people forgotten all the leaders and volunteers who brought freedom to our nation? If we have to build a strong nation, we must first learn to respect those who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the nation. In this regard, two groups of people can play a prominent role. First come teachers and educational institutions who are in a position to help the growing generation imbibe a sense of national pride; the next is the media, which should play a constructive role in building up national character. It will be a shame if these two groups fail to mould the attitude of the people - both the young and the old.

Let us not forget the builders of our heritage, and those who volunteered to sacrifice their lives for the nation. We do not need any particular day to pay our homage to all these elders.

No one is useless in this world who lightens the burden of another.

- Charles Dickens

Ours is a world where people don't know what they want and are willing to go through hell to get it.

The chief obstacle to the progress of the human race is the human race.

- Don Marquis

Whatever happens in government could have happened differently and it usually would have been better if it had.

- Charles Frankel

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## MAIL

## BAG

#### Reader Aravind Vijayaraghvan of Toronto, Canada, has this to say:

I am in the 4th Grade. I have been reading Chandamama for the last two years. I have learnt many valuble morals from all of your stories. I also learn many things about Indian culture, because I am thousands of miles away from India. My favourite sections in the magazine are the stories that children write, their jokes, and of course the G-Man comics.

#### Reader Salil Dilip Pol of Thane writes:

I love *Chandamama* because it is not like other magazines. It gives the people living in any part of the world a chance to present themselves through their writings. *Chandamama* gives many good features. I enjoy all the articles. Three cheers to *Chandamama*!

#### This came from Ramhari U.Gholve of Pune:

My daughter Rajani showed me the April issue of *Chandamama* and I was glad to read the poems, stories and jokes sent by young children. I liked the story "Upstairs, Downstairs" very much. Really, *Chandamama* is giving the best opportunity to all children from every nook of the world who wish to show their talents.

#### Contributor Mrs. Kanthalakshmi Chandramouli, Chennai, writes:

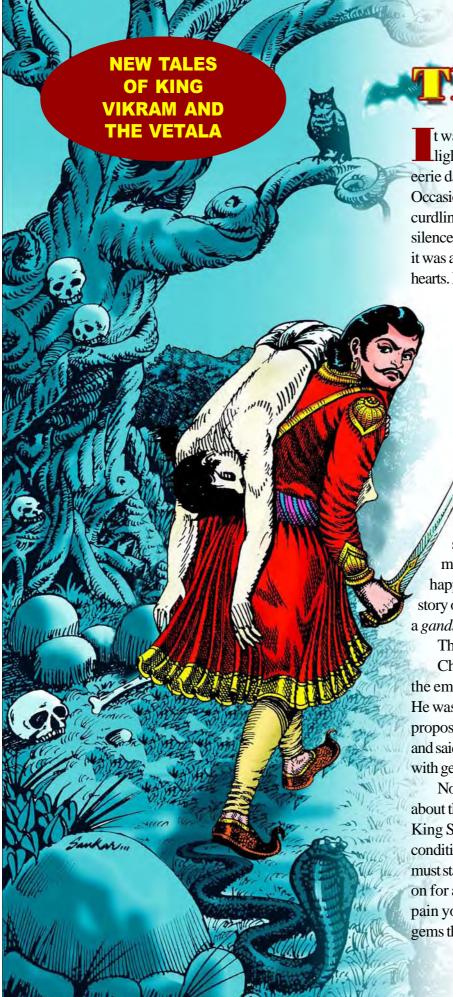
While travelling from Baroda, my co-travellers—a grandfather, father, mother, and two noisy, naughty kids, were mentioning that all the elders, including great grandfather, read *Chandamama* regularly. So that they can narrate to the children stories of Indian culture and values. That, in a nutshell, is the success story of *Chandamama*.

## Reader Sambit Sh.Pattnaik of Bhawanipatna has this to say:

I am13 years old. I like all the stories in *Chandamama*. It has been my best friend for the past seven years. I never want to be separated from the magazine. I would be happy if you give information about children's websites. I miss the Vasudha section in *Chandamama*.

#### This came from S.Akaash of Thrissur:

I like Arya (comics), Kaleidoscope, Laugh Till You Drop and the Folk Tale. "Secret of Nature's Love" and "Sweet Revenge" in the March issue were splendid. Hats off to *Chandamama*!



#### TRUE LOVE

t was a dark, moonless night. Occasional flashes of lightning illuminated the sombre scene, causing an eerie dance of jerky shadows in the cremation ground. Occasionally, a jackal's spine-chilling howl or the blood-curdling laughter of some unseen evil spirit cut into the silence that hung, shroud-like, over the area. Altogether, it was a scene that would strike terror into the bravest of hearts. But nothing could daunt the intrepid King Vikram.

Once again, he made his way to the gnarled tree from which the corpse hung. Bones crunched under his feet and a screeching ghost rose from the dust in shuddering frenzy as he marched ahead.

Oblivious to all this, he reached the tree and brought down the corpse. Slinging it astride his shoulder, he had just begun his return journey when the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King, you're undertaking this hazardous and tiresome task not for yourself but for someone else. Are you sure that the person for whom you're taking so much trouble deserves it? Errors in judgment can happen even to celestial beings, let alone kings! The story of Prakash illustrates one such error on the part of a gandharva. Listen to it and judge for yourself."

The vampire then narrated the following story.

Chandrakant was a *gundharva* (celestial being) in the employ of Swetasya, the king of the *gundharvas*. He was in love with a nymph named Supriya. When he proposed to her, Supriya gave him a large ivory casket and said, "I shall marry you only if you can fill this for me with gems from Swetasya's treasury."

Not knowing what to do, Chandrakant told his master about the condition Supriya had laid down for her hand. King Swetasya said, "You may have the gems, but on condition that you let me test your love for Supriya. You must stand still while I throw the gems at you. This will go on for as long as you can stand it. Let's see how much pain you can endure for the sake of your love! All the gems that I pelt you with shall be yours."



Chandrakant agreed to the condition. But his resolve was broken by the very first precious stone thrown by the king, which struck him on his forehead and left him bleeding profusely. "Please stop, my lord!" he cried.

"So this is the strength of your love!" taunted the king. Chandrakant flushed and retorted, "My lord, I love Supriya with all my heart. But the pain inflicted by your test is so intense as to be beyond the endurance of any lover!"

Hearing this, the king lost his temper. "You, who cannot understand or appreciate the power of true love, do not deserve to remain in the land of *gundharvas*!" he burst out. "Turn into a human being and descend on earth!"

A horrified Chandrakant fell at the king's feet and pleaded to be freed from the curse. Moved by pity, Swetasya said, "Very well. I shall fill Supriya's casket with gems and you may take it with you. The day you meet a true lover, you shall be freed from your curse when you gift the casket to him or her." To this, Chandrakant had willy-nilly to agree.

Carrying the casket, Chandrakant descended to earth and began roaming around in the guise of a holy

man. After travelling through many lands, he finally reached a village called Janakpur.

There lived in Janakpur a young man named Sasank. His family consisted, besides his wife and children, of his aged parents and a number of younger siblings. Sasank was a model householder – an obedient son, a loving brother and a caring husband and father, who discharged all his domestic duties to perfection. It was he who supported the family. His youngest brother, Prakash, however, was a lazy youth who was both able-bodied and good-natured, but would not do a stroke of work.

Hearing of Sasank's reputation, Satyapal, a wealthy man from a neighbouring village, offered his daughter, Mohana, in marriage to him.

At the wedding, Sasank's brother Prakash met Mohana's beautiful younger sister Madhumati and fell in love with her. Madhumati was charmed by his appearance and manners, but she had also been told of his lazy nature. So, when he confessed to her his love and asked her to marry him, she responded, "If you can buy a house for us to live in, I'll marry you."

"Is that all? Just give me a few days' time; I shall buy a fine house and then we can get married," promised Prakash.

"Is that so? Tell me one thing – you have no job, nor any source of income. So, where will you get the money to buy the house?" queried Madhumati.

"That shouldn't be a problem," replied Prakash breezily. "I shall ask for my share of the family property."

"That won't do!" argued Madhumati firmly. "I want a house bought with money *you* earn by your labour!"

Prakash was flabbergasted. He had never expected such a condition. An easygoing youth, he had never done any work in his life. Even if he started now, it would surely take him years to put together the amount required to buy a house. Would Madhumati wait that long for him? Thinking it over, he concluded that the condition was impossible to fulfil. He made up his mind to forget her and get on with his life.

But he soon discovered that forgetting Madhumati was not so easy. Memories of her haunted his thoughts, to the extent that he lost his peace of mind and began to waste his time.

Prakash's drawn looks and careworn countenance had not escaped his brother's attention. One day, Sasank took him aside and, by solicitous questioning, drew out the secret grief that was burdening his heart. Having heard him out, he said, "My father-in-law tells me that Madhumati had received marriage proposals from many wealthy youths, but rejected them all. This makes it clear that she is no gold-digger. So, if your love for her is genuine, start thinking of how you can earn the money to buy a house. Rest assured that if she too loves you in turn, she will certainly wait for you!"

His elder brother's words filled Prakash with fresh resolve to prove himself worthy of Madhumati's hand. At the same time, he was at a loss as to how exactly to make so much money. He repaired to a nearby forest to puzzle over the problem. Coincidentally, it was at this juncture that the *gundharva* Chandrakant, in the guise of a holy man, appeared there. Noticing that the youth looked worried, he asked him for the reason.

Finding a sympathetic listener in the holy man, it was not long before Prakash confided his woes to him and asked him for his advice.

Chandrakant asked, "Are you ready to endure any amount of torture for Madhumati's sake?"

"Yes, I am," answered Prakash unhesitatingly.

"Good. Come with me and I shall give you three tasks. On successfully completing them, you shall become a millionaire," assured Chandrakant and he led Prakash to a dark cave in the interior of the forest.

"Your first task is this – you must sit here for a full day and a night with eyes closed, reciting Lord Hanuman's name. You must not go to sleep, and on no account should you open your eyes until I come here tomorrow morning and call out to you. After that I shall instruct you on your next task," said Chandrakant. Prakash immediately sat down in the posture prescribed for meditation, and began his task. Chandrakant went away.

As time passed, Prakash heard unearthly shrieks and laughter around him. However, mindful of his promise to Chandrakant, he resisted the temptation to open his eyes.

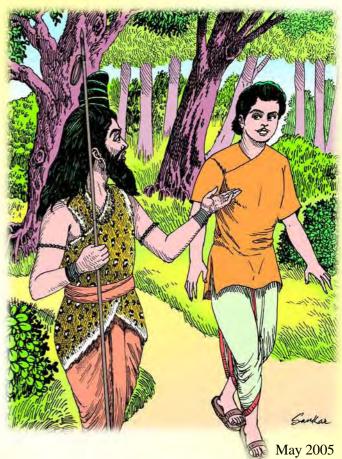
When Chandrakant reached the cave the next morning, he found Prakash in the same position in which he had left him. "Wonderful, my boy!" he exclaimed in ad-

miration. "You have completed the first task successfully. Get up now and come with me."

Chandrakant led him into an inner chamber of the cave and showed him a big statue of a hideous-looking demon. "Do you see that key in the open mouth of the statue? Your next task is to put your hand in its mouth and take out the key. As you do so, the statue's mouth will close on your hand and you will suffer excruciating pain. But if your love for Madhumati is genuine, you will find the strength to complete the task despite the pain."

Mustering up all his courage, Prakash marched up to the statue and plunged his hand into the open mouth. The next moment, the stone jaws came together, trapping his hand in a vice-like clasp. Prakash felt as if every bone in his hand was being crushed to powder. He had never undergone so much pain before. Tears sprang to his eyes, but at the memory of Madhumati he bit his lip and did not let even a groan escape him.

After what seemed like an eternity (though in reality it was not more than a minute), Prakash began to feel the pressure easing. The monster was opening its mouth! As sensation returned to his crushed hand, he realised that



Chandamama 11

his fingers were touching the key. With great difficulty, he managed to pull it into his grip. Then he turned triumphantly towards Chandrakant, the key dangling from his almost lifeless fingers.

"Bravo, my boy!" exclaimed Chandrakant in heartfelt admiration. "You've accomplished the most difficult task successfully. Now, there's something else to be done before we go to the final task. Do you observe the keyhole in the statue's torso? Insert the key into it and see what happens."

Prakash did so. The next moment, much to his surprise a hidden trapdoor, large enough to allow a man, opened in the statue's stomach. Chandrakant crawled into the opening and beckoned Prakash to follow suit.

He found himself in a tiny alcove. In one corner stood an ivory casket. Chandrakant handed it to him and said, "As you see, this is locked. Your third task is to wrench off the lock with your bare hands."

Prakash set himself to the task with a will. He tugged at the lock with all his strength, but it did not budge. Soon his fingers were bleeding, but Prakash persevered. After he had struggled for nearly an hour, the lock finally gave way and broke off.

The next moment, there was a blinding flash. As Prakash stood blinking in confusion, he saw that the holy man had vanished. In his place stood a celestial figure.

"I am a *gundharva* under a curse," explained Chandrakant. "It is your steadfast love for Madhumati that has liberated me from the curse. Thank you, young man! As a reward I'm giving you this casket, which is filled with rare and invaluable gems. Open it and behold your bounty!"

However, when Prakash opened the casket, his eyes were greeted not by the sight of a treasure, but that of a host of hissing snakes! When he pointed this out to Chandrakant, the latter replied, "If the gems appear like snakes to you, it means that your love is not perfect; there is someone else whose love is greater than yours. Go and bring all your family members here."

Prakash obeyed. His parents, sisters and sister-inlaw all perceived the contents of the casket as snakes. However, when Sasank looked, he alone could see the gems in the casket. Chandrakant, therefore, presented the casket to him before returning to his own domain.

Concluding the story at this point, the vampire demanded, "O King! Even the *gundharva* Chandrakant was not capable of withstanding the kind of ordeal Prakash endured for his lady-love. So why did the gems appear like snakes to Prakash and reveal themselves to his brother? If you keep quiet despite knowing the answer, your head shall shatter to fragments!"

The king replied, "Prakash's love was confined to Madhumati, whereas Sasank loved and cared for his entire family. Thus his love was infinitely greater and nobler, and he alone deserved to have the gems!"

No sooner had the king finished speaking than the vampire, along with the corpse, moved off his shoulder and flew back to the tree. With a little sigh, King Vikram squared his shoulders and marched towards the tree again.





## Newsflash

#### **'COLD' FACTS!**

here are nearly 2,000 soldiers guarding India's border in Siachin, which experiences a temperature of minus 55 to 60 degrees Celsius during winter. To protect themselves from such an extreme cold weather, each of them is given an outfit costing more than Rs. 2 lakh! Some of the items in the uniform are Kofak boots from Austria (Rs.7,200), socks from Switzerland (Rs. 1,100), gloves from Italy (Rs. 2,100), woollen jackets from Switzerland (Rs. 18,000), trousers also from Switzerland (Rs. 8,800), shirts from Finland (Rs. 3,400), and caps from Canada costing Rs. 1,000 each. Despite all this protective cover, the army men often complain of unenduring cold and they frequently suffer from frostbite. However, they do not run away from their onerous duties.

#### NOW A COUNT OF TIGERS



The authorities were recently horrified when 26 tigers went missing in the Sarsika Tiger Sanctuary in Rajasthan, considered one of the most important wildlife parks. It has now been decided to take a fresh count of all tigers in the country. This national census will also take a count of other predator animals. The count will begin in November and last till February 2006. The estimated tiger population is 3,600–730 less than the count in 1989–in 27 tiger reserves spread over 37,800 sq. km. Before Independence, the country had as many as 40,000 tigers!



overtake China. According to the 2004 Revised World Population Prospects released in February last, India's population is likely to cross 1.6 billion by 2050, while China's head count will be around 1.4 billion. Come 2030—the crossover date—and the population of the two countries will run on parallel lines for a few years. Meanwhile, on January 6, the population of China reached the 1.3 billionth mark when a baby was born to Zhang Tong in a Beijing hospital. "I'm the happiest man in the world!" cried father Zhang Tong.



#### From the pen of Ruskin Bond

ost Himalayan villages lie in the valleys, where there are small streams, a fairly fertile soil, and protection from the biting winds that come through the mountain passes in winter. The houses

are usually made of rough granite, and have sloping slate roofs so that the heavy monsoon rain can slide off easily. During the dry autumn months, the roofs are often covered with pumpkins, left there to ripen in the sun.

One October night, when I was sleeping in a friend's house in a village up in the mountains, I was woken up by a thumping on the roof. I woke my friend and asked him what was happening.

"It's only a bear," he said.

"Is it trying to get in?" I asked.

"No, it's after the pumpkins."

And a little later, when we looked out of the small window, we saw a black bear making off through a field like a thief in the night, a pumpkin held to his chest. That was the first bear I had seen in the wild.

In winter, when snow covers the higher mountains, the brown and black Himalayan bears descend to lower altitudes in search of food. Sometimes, they forage in the fields. As they are short-sighted and suspicious of anything that moves, they can be dangerous; but, like most wild animals, they will avoid human beings if they can, and are aggressive only when accompanied by their cubs.

The people of the hills always advise me to run downhill if chased by a bear. They say that bears find it easier to run uphill than downhill! I am yet to be chased by a bear, but I have seen three; and two of these encounters were quite comical.

Once, while I was sitting in a spruce tree, hoping to see a pair of pine-martins that lived nearby, I heard the whining grumble of a bear, and presently a small bear ambled into the clearing beneath the tree.

He was little more than a cub, and I was not alarmed. I sat very still, waiting to see what he would do.

At first he put his nose to the ground and sniffed his way along until he came to a large anthill. Here he began huffing and puffing, blowing rapidly in and out of his



## MYTHREE BEARS

nostrils, so that the dust from the anthill flew in all directions. But he was disappointed, because the anthill had long since been deserted. And so, grumbling, he made his way to a wild plum tree, and shinning rapidly up the smooth trunk, was soon settled on the topmost branches. It was only then that he saw me.

The bear at once scrambled several feet higher up the tree and laid himself out flat on a branch. As it wasn't a thick branch, it left a large expanse of the bear showing on either side. He tucked his head away behind another branch, and so long as he could not see me, was well satisfied that he was completely hidden, although he couldn't help grumbling with anxiety.

But, like all bears, he was full of curiosity. And slowly, inch by inch, his black snout appeared over the edge of the branch. As soon as his eyes met mine, he drew his head back with a jerk and hid his face.

The young bear did this several times. I waited until he wasn't looking, then moved some way down the tree. When the bear looked up again and saw that I was missing, he was so pleased that he stretched right across to another branch and helped himself to a plum. At that, I couldn't help bursting into laughter.

The startled young bear tumbled out of the tree, dropped through the branches for some 15 feet, and landed with a thud on a heap of dry leaves. He was quite unhurt, but ran from the clearing, grunting and squealing with fright. So much for my second bear.

My third bear also revealed the inquisitiveness of the species. I was staying with another friend, Prem, in his village in Garhwal, when we learnt that an adult bear had been active in a field of maize. We took up our position on a high outcrop of rock, which gave us a clear view of the moonlit field.

A little after midnight, a big bear came down to the edge of the field, but he was suspicious and probably smelt that there were men in the vicinity. But he was hungry. And so, after standing up as high as possible on his hind legs and peering about to see whether or not the

field was empty, he came cautiously into the open and made his way towards the maize.

When about half-way, however, his attention was suddenly attracted by some Tibetan prayer flags which had been strung up between two trees. On spotting the flags, the bear gave a little grunt of disapproval and began backing away. But the fluttering of the little flags was a puzzle that he felt he had to figure out; and so, after a few backward steps, he again stopped and watched them.

Now he advanced until he was within a few yards of the flags. Then he again got on his hind legs and examined them from different angles. Seeing that they did not attack him or appear in any way dangerous, he made his way right up to the flags, taking only two or three steps at a time, and having a good look each time before advancing. Eventually he went confidently up to the flags and pulled them all down. Then, after examining them carefully, he moved into the field to maize.

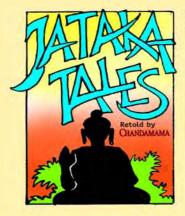
But my friend, Prem, to whom the field belonged, decided that he wasn't going to lose any more maize. So he started shouting and the villagers woke up and came out of their houses beating drums and kerosene tins.

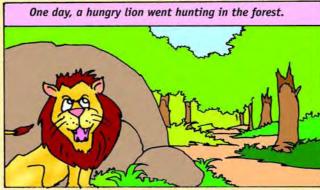
Deprived of his dinner, the bear made off in a bad temper. He ran downhill, and at a good speed too, and I am glad I wasn't in his path just then. Uphill or downhill, an angry bear is best given a very wide berth.



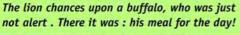
#### **Jataka Tales**

#### THE OVER REACHER





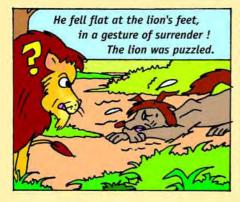


















The two animals became fast friends. Every day, the lion brought the jackal meat to eat.

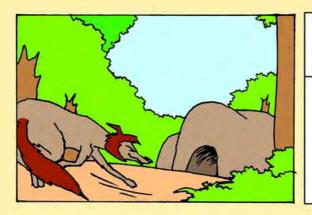


The jackal grew plump and healthy. Soon he felt guilty that he was not bringing home food for his friend.



#### **Jataka Tales**

#### THE OVER REACHER

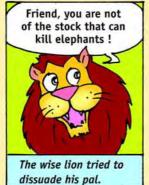


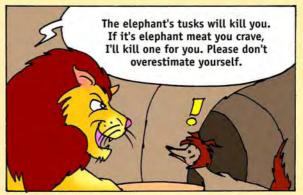
The jackal went up to the lion's cave.

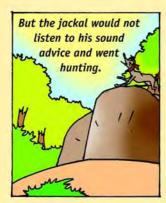
> Sir, I have been a burden on you so long. I now wish to make amends.

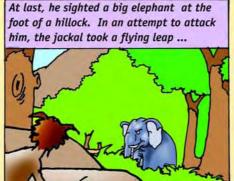


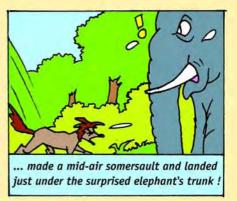
Please permit me to go hunting today, while you relax. I shall slay an elephant and bring home enough meat for you.















Off he went leaving the jackal crushed to pulp!

Soon, the lion saw the crushed body of his friend, and shook his head sadly. He was foolish, vain and did not know his limitations. What a pity! JT-17/2, 2000 The End



- By Rosscote Krishna Pillai

#### **MAY BORN-RONALD ROSS**

onald Ross, who discovered that Anopheles mosquito was the transmitter of the parasite which caused malaria in humans, was born on May 13, 1857 in Almora in present day Uttaranchal. His father, Sir C. C. G. Ross, served in the British Indian Army. When Ronald was eight, he was sent to a school in England. Although he had a flair for poetry, fiction and mathematics, his father wanted him to study medicine after his schooling. Despite his varied interests, Ronald managed to graduate in medicine in 1879.

He returned to India in 1881 to serve as a medical officer in the Indian Army. He served in various parts for 18 years, beginning his tenure in Madras, where he came across "stinking tanks" and hundreds of people dying of epidemics like cholera, plague and malaria; although

he treated cases, he was not very much interested in investigating the causes. He went back to England in 1888 and got himself trained in bacteriology and microscopy. In 1889, he married Rosa Bloxam.

On his return to India with his wife and a microscope, he began investigating malaria which he had to deal with in several parts of the country during his service with the army. Earlier, in 1880, a French army surgeon, Charles Alphonse Laveran, working in Algeria, had studied a large number of malarial cases and recognized for the first time that a protozoon, a single-celled living thing, an animal parasite rather than a bacterium, entering the human blood was the cause of malaria in human beings. Following up this discovery in right earnest, Ross began attempts to verify whether the parasite was the cause of malaria while examining the blood of hundreds of patients.

Ronald went to London again in 1894, when he met with an eminent English doctor, Patrick Manson. Working in China for 22 years, he had discovered that mosquitoes could suck germs from human blood. Manson showed Ross the malarial parasite and thereby convinced him about the correctness of Laveran's discovery. He inspired Ross to pursue intensive investigations into the mode of transmission of the disease, after he returned to India in 1895. All through his research he was in constant touch with Manson. Between them they exchanged 173 letters, which are considered one of the celebrated scientific correspondences.

Ross discovered that mosquitoes transferred the parasite to man's blood by biting. This discovery brought him several honours including the Nobel Prize for Medicine/Physiology in 1902.

#### **FLOWER-COLOURS**

ow does a flower get its colour? C.V.Raman, who won the Nobel Prize in Physics, had found that out as a result of more than six years of devoted research. In February 1970, in his lecture at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in Delhi, the world-renowned physicist explained how his fascination for the bell-shaped flower of an exotic creeper called Morning Glory had inspired him to find out what gave the flower its colour. He said: "Since I am an early riser, I could catch the Morning Glory in all its glory. The flowers fade by 11 a.m. and are gone by the evening. The beauty is temporary and has to be caught each morning. I found on examination that except for a band of absorption, the entire spectrum was present in the colour of the flower."



Dr Raman had also subjected to spectroscopic study the gorgeous blue colour of the Jacaranda flowers. About those flowers he said, "The tree looked as if a blue cloud had enveloped it completely. Minute observation showed that there were three weak absorption bands which resulted in the gorgeous blue."

The Nobel Laureate discovered two chemicals, Florachrome A which caused the blue colour, and Florachrome B which caused the red. He found that the two did not react when he mixed them in the laboratory, but the mixture showed absorption bands. He pointed out that the mixing of the chemicals taking place in the flower itself in different proportions led to a variety of colours.

#### **QUOTATIONS**

"A man's value to the community depends primarily on how far his feelings, thoughts and actions are directed towards promoting the good of his fellows."

#### - Albert Einstein on 'Society and Personality'

"The late Professor Einstein, whose letter to President Roosevelt induced the latter to mobilize the industrial and technical resources of the American continent towards the atom effort, was incessant in his denunciation of atomic warfare. In his last years, he even remarked that if he had to choose his career again, he would have preferred that of a pedlar or a plumber to that of a physicist."

- Meghnad Saha Presidential address at the World Assembly for Peace, Helsinki, in June 1955.

#### **SCIENCE QUIZ**

- 1. What causes the disease of rabies?
  - a) virus b) bacteria
  - c) fungus d) amoeba.
- 2. Name the first person who travelled to outer space.
  - a) Alan Shepard b) Yuri Gagarin
  - c) Neil Armstrong
  - d) Alexei Leonov.
- 3. In which year did man first land on the moon?
  - a) 1957 b) 1962 c) 1974 d)1969.
- 4. How many bones does an adult human body have?
  - a) 320 b)65 c) 128 d)206.

Answers: 1. a. virus, 2. b). Yuri Gagarin, 3. d. 1969, 4. d. 206.

#### A PAGE FROM INDIAN HISTORY

## Princess Zebunnisa,

nother remarkable character in Mughal history is Princess Zebunnisa, the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb. Like her uncle Dara Shikoh, Zebunnisa was devoted to studies from her childhood. She learnt not just Arabic but Persian, mathematics and astronomy from the famous scholars of the time.

According to her biographers, she was the favourite daughter of Aurangzeb and had considerable influence over him even as a young girl. He often asked for her opinion when making palace appointments and sometimes accepted her decisions even when he did not agree with her views. Princess Zebunnisa was also said to be very beautiful. Moreover, she was blessed with a rare sense of wisdom and detachment.

Aurangzeb once gave her a very pretty mirror as a birthday gift. The gift was especially dear to Zebunnisa

May 2005

was especially dear to Zebunnisa and she always used it. One day, while she was combing her hair as her maid held the mirror for her, it slipped from the maid's hands and broke into many pieces.

The maid was terrified as she knew how dear the mirror was to her mistress. She fell at her feet begging Zebunnisa to have mercy on her. To her surprise Zeb smiled at her, saying, "Get up and don't be afraid. The mirror is nothing but an instrument of flattery. I'm glad it is broken. It only reminds me that nothing is permanent on this earth and everything has to face destruction some day, including the body that is now considered beautiful."

Things were very different after Aurangzeb seized his father's throne. His feelings for his daughter also changed drastically. Zebunnisa was 21 years old at the time. He became stricter, far more conservative, and really severe when it came to observing the Islamic law. He now strongly disapproved of Zebunnisa's talent, her scholarship, her fame and her desire to become a Sufi and follow the path of devotion like her aunt Jahan Ara. Being the daughter of the reigning emperor, she was given Tees Hazari, the imposing garden house that had once belonged to Jahan Ara, as her jagir (property). Here she built an excellent library. She also built many astronomical observatories, schools and serais. Her library was better than any other private collection of the time. She employed many scholars to compose literary works. Others were employed to copy manuscripts. She paid the scholars handsomely. She

> loved poetry and was a special patron of the poets. In fact, she was herself a poet and wrote in Persian under the pen name of Makhfi (the hidden one). Her poems circulated among her contemporaries and were greatly appreciated.

Aurangzeb with his conservative outlook bitterly resented her renown in the world of scholars. He had never approved of her writing poetry and now seriously tried to put an end to it. He was convinced that nothing short of public

Chandamama

### the "Hidden One"

humiliation would make this possible. To do this, he specially invited Nasir Ali, a handsome Persian noble, to his court to challenge Zebunnisa to a poetry contest. The challenge was that Nasir should compose one line of a *sher* (couplet) which Zebunnisa would have to complete within three days. If she failed, she would have to renounce poetry for the rest of her life. Nasir was not just one of the best known poets of the time; he was also an ardent admirer of the princess and a suitor for her hand.

He happily accepted the challenge.

Aurangzeb had already ordered him to compose such a difficult line that no one in the kingdom, let alone Zebunnisa, should be able to complete it.

The first line composed by Nasir was: "Rare it is to find a pearl that is black and white." Zebunnisa was greatly distressed when she heard the line. She had never heard of a pearl that was both black and white; so how could she possibly compose a *sher* on it? She felt humiliated to find that despite being a poet of renown, she could not complete a couplet.

Three days rushed by and still she could not think of a suitable line to complete the *sher*. She decided to put an end to her life rather than live in disgrace. When her friends heard about her decision, one of them came running to stop her. She was weeping profusely as she pleaded with the princess not to die. Zebunnisa looked at her and her face cleared. "Don't cry, dear. I've found the line for completing the sher!" Then she sent for her father.

Aurangzeb came rushing hoping to find a crushed

and defeated Zebunnisa. But she looked up proudly and told her father, "I've completed the *sher*, your majesty." She put forth her composition along with Nasir Ali's first line which now read: "Rare it is to find a pearl that is black and white / Except in the surma-mingled teardrops in the beauty's eyes." Needless to say, Zebunnisa never gave up writing poetry. But legend has it that Aurangzeb had Nasir Ali put to death for having dared to love the princess. Zebunnisa remained unmarried. Nearly 400 of her poems were published in Persian as the Diwan-i-Makhfi after her death. Many of these are ghazals (lyrical love poems).

Aurangzeb accused Zebunnisa of supporting her younger brother Akbar, who had rebelled against Aurangzeb. He had her imprisoned for some years. Later, she was allowed to lead a quiet life until her death on May 26, 1702. She was buried in her favourite Tees Hazari just outside the Kabuli Gate in Delhi.

- Swapna Dutta

## CUMPSES OF THE DEVI BHAGAVATAM

Suddenly, they heard a voice from above. "All the guards have fallen into a stupor by the power I have imposed on them. The doors of the prison as well as the castle will now open up. There is nobody to check you. Go and leave the child with Yasoda."

The voice was that of Yogamaya, the Divine Mother.

Vasudeva took the child in his arms and proceeded towards the door of the prison. The door flung open. So did the eight doors of the castle, one after another.

Vasudeva arrived on the

banks of river Kalindi. The river was then in spate. Soon it began to rain. Everything was dark. But a shaft of light from above guided him. He could also feel as though a mighty hood, spread over his head, was protecting him from rain.

Soon he was with Yasoda who had just given birth to a female child. Vasudeva exchanged his baby boy with her newborn daughter. He then returned to his prison-cabin inside the castle.

The female baby cried out. At once the open doors got shut on their own and the guards woke up from their slumber. They ran to Kamsa and informed him that Devaki had just given birth to her eighth child.

Kamsa rushed into the cabin and looked at the child, his eyes spitting fire!



But what did he see? Vishnu's incarnation ought to be a boy, not a girl! Was there any trick in the prophecy? Kamsa felt uncertain for a while. He decided not to waste any more time. He snatched the child from Devaki and came out hurriedly. Then he caught hold of the child's legs and raised it, intending to bring it down on a slab of stone.

But a miracle took place. The child slipped out of Kamsa's hands. He could see the glimpse of a luminous figure disappearing in the sky.

"You may live in a fool's

paradise, Kamsa, sure that you have forestalled your doom. But know that your destroyer is growing up, safely, elsewhere!" announced a soft voice.

Kamsa thought he was going crazy.

He summoned his lieutenants like Dhenuka, Vatsaka and Pralamva. "Kill all the newborn babes of Gokul. This must be done if you wish to see me alive. Let the demoness Pootana, an expert at killing kids, direct this operation.

In the morning everybody heard that Nanda's wife, Yasoda, had given birth to a son. Kamsa, too, heard the news. But it was not easy to kill Nanda's son, after all. Pootana tried to kill the child feeding him with the poisoned milk from her breasts, but she herself died in the process. Thereafter Kamsa's lieutenants tried to kill

#### 17. THE MIRACLE

the boy under some pretext or the other, but they all got themselves killed.

All the while Krishna grew up and did wonders. Once he protected the people from the wrath of Indra by lifting the Govardhana hill with one finger. The people took shelter under it and were saved from a terrible downpour.

By and by Kamsa realised that Krishna was the boy destined to kill him. He continued in his effort to kill Krishna. He proposed to perform a festive rite in his castle and sent Akrura to fetch Krishna and his brother, Balarama, to attend it.

As soon as the two boys reached Mathura, a ferocious elephant was directed to trample upon them. But the boys escaped. Kamsa's wrestlers then challenged them to a combat, but they also got killed. At last, trying to push the boys to their death from a high platform, Kamsa himself was thrown to his death.

Vasudeva and Devaki were set at liberty. Krishna also liberated Kamsa's father, Ugrasen, and gave back the throne of Mathura to him.

Vasudeva sent the two princes to sage Sandipani for their early education. The lived with the guru for twelve years and completed their studies.

In the meanwhile Jarasandha, father-in-law of Kamsa, attacked and wrought havoc in Mathura, to avenge the death of Kamsa. He continued

to attack the city even after Krishna's return from the ashram of Sandipani.

He also instigated a tyrant, Kalayavan, to attack Mathura.

Krishna told his kinsmen, "We, the Yadavas, are the targets of Jarasandha. He is extremely cruel. I do not want to see the people of Mathura harassed on our count. Let us go away to the region of the Raivataka hills which, I have heard, is a charming place. The area is called Dwaraka."

Everybody agreed to the proposal. Soon the Yadavas migrated to Dwaraka.



After the Yadavas had settled down in the new place, Krishna and Balarama paid a visit to Mathura.

Coming to learn of their visit, Kalayavan hurried to Mathura to confront them. Krishna, pretended to take to his heels. Kalayavan gleefully pursued him.

Krishna hid inside the hermitage of sage Muchukunda. He was fast asleep. Kalayavan entered the hermitage and gave a kick to the sage.

The sage sat up. Trembling with rage, he cast a look at Kalayavan. At once a fire consumed the tyrant. He was reduced to ashes. Krishna and Balarama returned to Dwaraka.

Rukmini, the princess of Vidarbha, loved Krishna. But the powerful Chedi prince, Sishupal, wished to marry her. On a request from the princess, Krishna led her away to Dwaraka and married her. (To continue)



## LUCK FROM THE JKY

#### **LEGENDS FROM OTHER LANDS (JAVA)**

enturies ago there were several kingdoms in Java, an island, now a part of Indonesia. The insignia of one such kingdom was a cock. This is the story behind it. The prince, who was the only son of the king, had developed a strange hobby. He was extremely fond of cock fight. His pals would grab healthy cocks wherever they found them and train them to fight. Then, from time to time, they would enjoy the game on an open ground behind the palace.

The people of the land resented losing their cocks for the fun of those idle youths, but who could muster courage to complain about it to the king? After all it was the prince, their future king, who was behind the whole thing! But it so happened that one day, while roaming the land in disguise, the king saw some of his son's friends forcibly taking a farmer's cock proudly declaring that they were doing it on behalf of the prince. The king felt embarrassed and talked to the villagers and found out that this was a regular harassment they had to suffer.

On returning to the palace, the first thing the king did was to order the prince to leave the kingdom at once. The king was usually so haughty and strict in every matter that nobody had the courage to request him to reconsider the matter. The prince had to quit the palace. He was followed by the royal spies till they made sure that he had entered the forest that marked the frontier of the kingdom.



It was already evening. Soon darkness enveloped the forest. The prince did not know where to go. He could hear the cries of wild beasts, and that made him very uneasy though he was a brave young man.

Luckily he saw a flickering light coming from a hut. He went and knocked. A young lady opened the door and looked at him, from head to foot, with suspicion. The prince, told her all about his misfortune, but did not reveal that he was the prince of the land. She took pity on him and gave him shelter. Her parents, who lived in the forest and earned their living by collecting medicinal plants and selling them to physicians, had died when the boat by which they were crossing the nearby river had upturned. She did not know where to go and lived there all alone, continuing the trade of her parents.

The prince stayed back to live with her and then married her. He was strong and intelligent. He could catch deer and birds and sold them to the woodcutters, apart from helping his wife in collecting medicinal plants.

Days passed. One day the prince heard from the woodcutters that the king, his father, had died. "Listen, my dear," he told his wife, "I'll be away in the town for a few days and then be back. Maybe, good luck would be ours before long."

"But do come back soon, for you know what is going to happen..." said his wife in a whisper. What she meant was, she would soon be a mother.

The prince smiled and went away. There was rejoicing in the town when the people saw the prince back. He was the sole heir to the throne. The king, after exiling his son, had not named anybody to succeed him. Naturally, the coronation took place immediately and several rituals were performed. The prince did not have an opportunity to get away from the ceremonies and visit his wife in the forest.

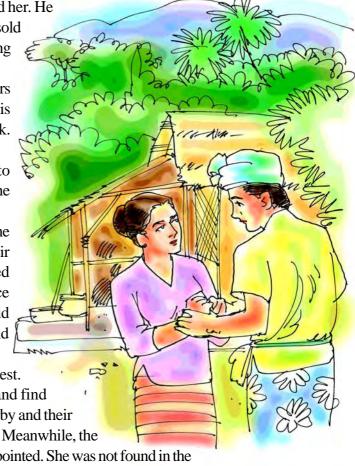
Meanwhile, a sudden flood had created havoc in the forest.

The prince's wife had to flee to a distant part of the forest and find shelter in a cave. A few kind-hearted woodcutters living nearby and their womenfolk took care of her when she was delivered of a son. Meanwhile, the new king, out to give her the most pleasant surprise, was disappointed. She was not found in the

new king, out to give her the most pleasant surprise, was disappointed. She was not found in the forest. There was no trace of her hut.

One day while the prince's wife sat with her infant son in front of her cave, a little chick fell from the beak of a huge bird that was flying overhead. The lady picked it up and nursed it. It grew up along with her son. Whoever saw it was surprised, for nobody had seen or heard of such a robust and smart cock even in fantasies. The cock could frighten the birds and animals around the cave.

Meanwhile, the new king had resumed cock-fights. Of course, now he did it in the right way, without stealing anybody's cock, but rewarding the owners of the winning cocks. The prince's son, named Kelaras, who was now twelve years of age heard about the king's hobby.





With his mother's permission he took his cock to the palace while the game was on. That day the cocks specially trained by the king himself were out to fight those brought there by their ambitious owners. The king's cocks

defeated all the cocks.

"My lord, what will you give me if my cock defeats yours?" asked Kelaras, without showing his cock kept in a basket. The king at once felt an attraction for that handsome boy, though he did not know why. "But what if our cock defeats yours?" asked the king who was sure of the success of his cocks.

"I'm a poor boy. I've come here hoping to win a reward through my cock. What can I give you? Of course, I can serve you for a while!" said Kelaras. He then brought out his cock.

"Good god, this is a giant cock!" exclaimed the courtiers. The fight began. Kelaras's cock defeated the king's prizefighter. The king rewarded Kelaras with a hundred coins. By and by, the mighty cock of Kelaras defeated all the cocks of the king and he was amply rewarded.

"My boy, will you mind selling your cock to me?" asked the king.

"Oh no. How can I? This is my friend. This came from the sky soon after my birth and has grown up with me. Now, my mother and I can lead a decent life because of the reward this cock has earned for us," said Kelaras.

"When were you born?" asked the king.

"Twelve years ago, after a great flood swept through the forest. My mother escaped into a distant cave, for my father had suddenly left her for some undisclosed reason," answered Kelaras.

The king now became more and more curious. "My boy, if you don't wish to sell your cock to me, will you at least agree to live here in the palace along with it?" asked the king.

"That, my lord, will depend on my mother," said the boy.

The king suddenly stood up. "Will you please take me to your mother?" he asked in a voice that almost choked. The boy appeared to him more and more familiar.

> The king and his entourage followed Kelaras. It was an unusual experience for the few forest-dwellers around the cave of Kelaras to see a king visiting the place.

> > Imagine the surprise of Kelaras's mother when she saw her son seated on the king's horse in front of him!

But did it take her long to recognise the king? Of course not. Then and there Kelaras was declared the crown prince and his mother the queen. The procession then headed towards the palace.

No wonder, when he succeeded to his father's throne, Kelaras made the cock the symbol of his kingdom. (M.D.)



# CHANDAMAMA PRESENTS KALEID SC PE

#### A DISASTER AVERTED

there was a severe drought in a village. The oldest resident predicted that the drought might continue for at least three years. The farmers in the village lost heart and

migrated to the city with their families.

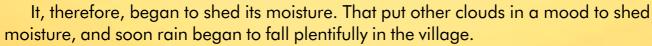
One farmer, however, stayed back. He ploughed his field, sowed seeds, and continued to work as if he were expecting a normal rainfall.

One day, a passing cloud was unable to contain its curiosity and shouted down to him: "Why're you working so hard? Don't you know that it won't rain for another three years?"

"Oh yes, I know that," replied the farmer, "but if I don't plough and sow and do all other things I'm used to doing for the next three years, I might forget how to do them, and then I would cease to be a farmer!"

The cloud thought: 'And if I don't

give rain for three years, I might forever lose the ability to do so.'



The drought was over. One man's decision not to leave his farm had turned away a great disaster.



S.K. Nazma Sultana (13), Jaggayyapet

#### KALEID SCSPE KALEID SCSPE KALEID SCSPE



#### **APPLE**

Apples are red Apples are green All apples are good to eat. Eat them plain or with salt But eat them every day For it's true an apple a day Keeps the doctor away. Remember red is bright Green is a delight Remember to eat any colour But eat them every day. Cut them round Cut them square Bite them from the whole Or chew a little All the same they're fun to eat Eat apples every day.

> Bhavana Kishore Baglodi (8) Sharjah

#### THE TEA PARTY

I had a little tea party, this afternoon at three, It was small, three guests in all,

I, myself, and me!

Myself ate up all the cake,

And I drank all the tea,

Me was sad but then also glad

Because she ate a cookie.

But just in time

(Because it was nine)

Myself passed the pie to me!

Nivedita Patil (10), Pune



#### KALEID#SC#PE KALEID#SC#PE KALEID#SC#PE

Teacher: Sonu, tell me, what do you call someone who drives a car? Sonu: A driver,

miss.

Teacher: Right!
Raghu, what do
you call someone
who draws
pictures?

Raghu: A drawer.



S. Akaash (11), Thrissur



Surgeon: How's the patient doing after I operated his heart?

Nurse: He's doing fine, except he seems to have a double heart beat. Surgeon: Ah! So, that's where it has

gone.... I was wondering where I kept my watch away.

Gudavalli Ganesh Chakravarthy (14)

Jaggayyapet

A rather fat man was on his way to board a train. He saw a weighing machine on the platform. He inserted a coin and waited for the card to come out. Instead, a

. . . . . . . .



voice was heard: "Gentlemen, one by one, please; not all together."

Salil Dilip Pol (13), Thane

Teacher: Ramu, give me the formula for water.

Ramu: HIJKLMNO

Teacher: I said, formula for water, not the alphabet.

Ramu : Didn't you teach us the formula H

to O?



Praveen: Deepak, I'm inviting you to my birthday party.

Deepak: Thank you, Praveen, I love parties.

Praveen: My address is (he gives the address).



Just ring the bell with your elbow.

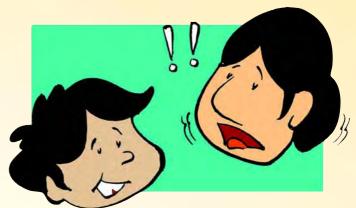
Deepak : Why?

Praveen:
Because your
hands won't be
free; you'll be
carrying a gift
for me.

Praveen Ganachari 13), Alike

Teacher: How far is the Earth from the Sun? Gopi: As far as the Sun is from the Earth.

S. Vismitha Katyayani (11), Bangalore

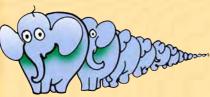






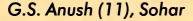
- 1. What is broken when you name it?
- 2. What did Mother Rope say to Baby Rope?
- 3. Which table is without legs?
- S. Vismitha Katyayani (11), Bangalore





4. Forty elephants stand in a row. How many heads are there in all?

5. What always runs after a tomato?





#### **PUZZLES**

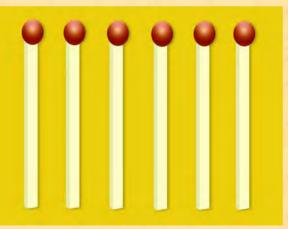
1. Without changing the order of the digits, insert three 'Plus' signs, one



'Division' and three 'Minus' signs to make the calculation correct:

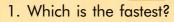
98765411 = 0

2. You are given 6 matchsticks. How will you arrange them so that each stick should touch all other sticks?



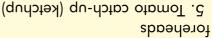
S. Akaash (11), Thrissur

#### COMPUTER QUIZ



- a) Super Computer b) Mini-Computer
- c) Main frame Computer d) PC
- 2. Which one of the following is a software?
  - a) Monitor b) Wordstar c) Printer d) System unit
- 3. Which of the following is a hardware?
  - a) Mouse b) DOS c) dBase d) Lotus
- 4. Whose job has been taken over by e-mail?
  - a) Milkman's b) Sweeper's c) Shopkeeper's d) Postman's

Sabarisan (15), Calicut



4. Forty-four, including four

3. Time-table,

2. Don't be knotty

J. Silence



#### Riddles:

3. a, 4. d

:ziuQ

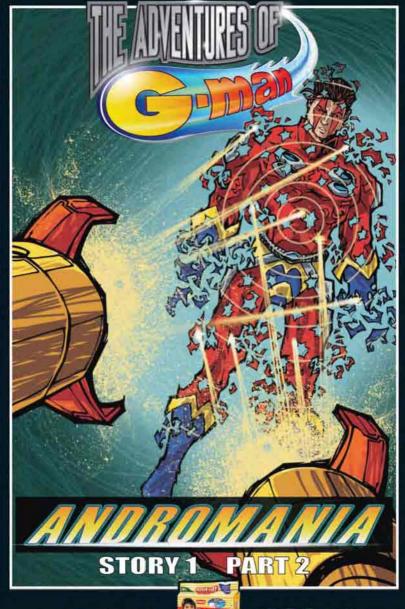
Computer

.2

 $0 = [-1 - 4 - 3 \div 3 + 7 + 8 + 9]$ 

-: səlzzuq

: syawers:



BROUGHT TO YOU BY



Story so far: When G-man learns that Terrolene is hatching a plan to destroy the planet he wastes no time in charging into his lair. Terrolene is waiting for him and promises to have a few surprises in store.



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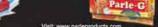
POWER SUPPLY FOR







Chandamama May 2005



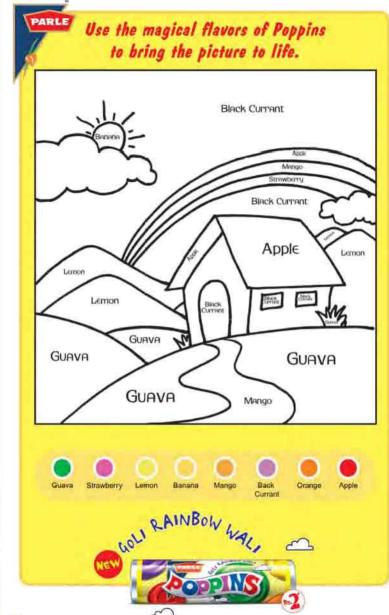
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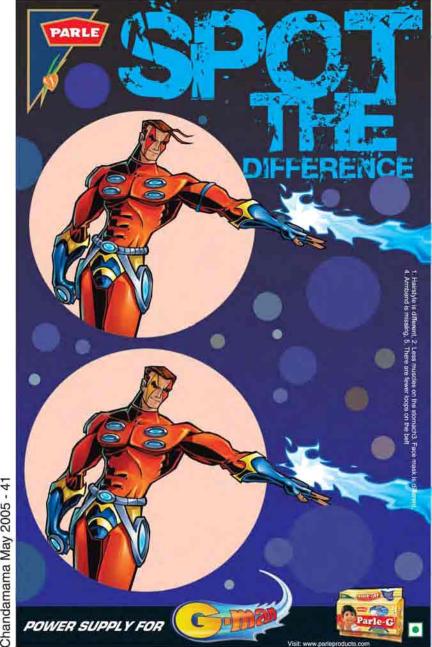
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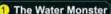


Next: What is G-man's plan? Will he succeed or is it just a desperate attempt by a man once defeated by the formidable forces of Terrolene. Find out G-man's daring new strategy in the next issue of Andromania.



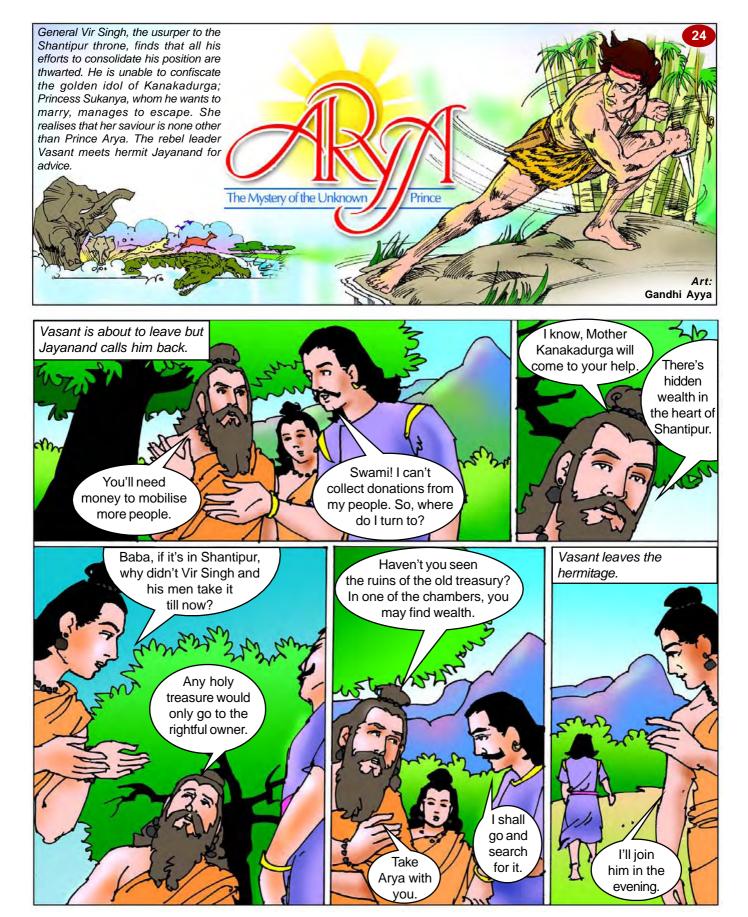
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- 2 Terrolene's Headquarters
- 3 The Destroyer of Evil

- 4 G-man's Power Supply
- 5 G-man's companion
- 6 The Master of Darkness











### An Island in a River

ur geography books tell us that an island is a land mass surrounded on all four sides by water. India has islands like the Andaman and Nicobar, Laccadives and Minicoy located in the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea. India also has islands in rivers. Bhavani in river Krishna, in Andhra Pradesh, is one. This island is only 4 km from Vijayawada. The picturesque island of Bhavani can be reached by boats from the Berham Park. As the

luxury boat cruises down the placid waters of the Krishna and picks up speed, one can catch the first glimpses of the island. Even at a distance, one can't but admire the natural, unsullied beauty of what can be described as a floating paradise. When we actually stand on the island, we realise we are in the laps of Mother Nature. Bhavani, with a vast forest coverage, dotted by shimmering ponds and undulating meadows, is an idyllic spot for day-long picnic.

### Chettinad Heritage

ot a palace, only a house; still it has a thousand windows! What is it? You can see this house in Karaikudi, once the capital of the prosperous Chettiar community. Their land was known as Chettinad,



which is now part of Tamil Nadu. The Chettiars engaged themselves in banking and business and made a name for themselves. Fame came to them also from their huge mansions, unsparingly using Italian marble and teak from Burma (now Myanmar). Wide courtyards, high ceiling and walls plastered with powedered shells, lime, jaggery, and spices make them cool in the hot and humid summer. The imposing main door invariably has intricate carvings of mythological characters. It is such houses that gave the prefix Nattukottai (country fort) to Chettiars. The Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation bagged a prize for presenting the heritage character of the Chettinad houses at an international meet in Germany.



### LAUGH TILL **YOU DROP!**

ADMIRATION, n. Our polite recognition of another's resemblance to ourselves.

- Ambrose Bierce

Two drivers came to a bridge on reverse for idiots."

So the other driver took his car in reverse and said, "That's okay. I do."

which only one car could cross at a time. One driver leaned out of his window and said, "I never



*Father:* Why does your Geography

Son: It's not a zero, the teacher ran

out of stars, so she gave me moon

exam have a big zero over it?

Rahul: Why are you weighing your

Ramu: My doctor has advised me to take only light food.

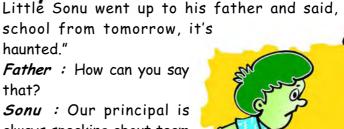
Little Sonu went up to his father and said, "I won't go to

food?

haunted."

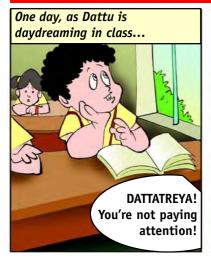
instead!

always speaking about team spirit and school spirit.





### **Dushtu Dattu**









## CONQUEST OF MOUNT EVEREST

**Tenzing Norgay** 



**Edmund Hillary** 

secrets remain secrets, forever, if held by one and are not forced out. Perhaps the Himalayas knew that. For a long, long time, it held the secret that its ranges had the highest peak in the world. And it might have retained the secret but for advanced techniques developed by engineers to survey the lie of the land.

In 1852, a team from the Survey of India, then headed by Sir George Everest, measured the height of the peak, referred to by the locals as *Chomolungma* (Goddess Mother of the Earth). They checked and rechecked because the reading took their breath away. They finally accepted that the peak, which they identified as Peak XV, rose up to a height of 8,848 m. That made it the highest peak in the world. Five years later, the peak was renamed Mount Everest, in honour of the former chief of the Survey of India.

The grandeur and glory of the Everest drew immense attention. Mountaineers of Europe, who had been scaling the peaks of the Alps, wondered what it would be like to scale the highest peak, the Everest. They were daring souls, raring to go. They started dreaming of standing atop the highest peak in the world. They agreed that their dream was besought with risks. They conceded that the Himalayan peaks would present their own hazards. These would be distinctively different to what the mountaineers had experienced while scaling the Alpine peaks. That was where the challenge of the Everest lay.

The mountaineers started gathering more details about the Everest. They read all available details about the Himalayas, its topography, as also the weather patterns that governed the terrain. They noticed that Mount Everest

could be approached either from Nepal or from Tibet. Finally, in 1921, they approached the Dalai Lama, the spiritual and administrative head of Tibet, for permission to scale the Peak.

The First expedition was launched in 1922. The mountaineers looked out for guides to lead them through the treacherous mountain slopes. They wanted porters to carry the tents and their personal belongings and medical and food supplies. The most vital of all were the oxygen cylinders. For, the air gets rarified at high altitudes and breathing becomes laboured. The mountaineer needs to take along oxygen to tide over the problem. They found the right men for the job in the Sherpas.

The Sherpas, originally from the province of Kham of Eastern Tibet (*Sher* means east; and *pa* means origin), had moved into Nepal and settled down, hundreds of years back, in the Khumbu region, south of the Everest. For generations they have been daring the mountains, moving to great heights to forage for food and fuel. They are hardy, fleet-footed like the mountain goats. They know the mountains inside out. To them the European mountaineers turned to provide guides and porters.

The First Expedition reached up to 8,170 m. Two years later, E.F. Norton came with a band of daring mountaineers, including George L. Mallory, an experienced mountaineer, Andrew Irvine, relatively a novice, but full of vim and spirit and eagerness, and Noel E. Odell, a geologist climber. On June 8, 1924, Mallory and Irvine set out from their high altitude camp (8,145 m). A slight mist draped the mountains. But the air was still. That enthused the climbers. Towards midday Odell, who was keeping watch, noticed two specks just below the Summit. It looked to Odell that the two had almost made it. Suddenly the weather changed for the worse. Thick fog gathered, throwing a curtain over the entire

mountains. The two mountaineers vanished without a trace. Their bodies, buried in ice and hence preserved in perfect condition, were found in a gorge about ten years ago. Did Odell sight them while they were returning after scaling the Everest? Were they the first men to stand atop the highest peak? Nobody knows for sure.

In 1951, the First British expedition to the Everest set out from Nepal, but it could not scale the Everest. Two years later, in 1953, a British team led by John Hunt, launched a fresh attack.

On May 29, Edmund Hillary, a young Australian mountaineer, and Tenzing Norgay, a Sherpa who had been part of several expeditions in the past, made it to the top. The news that Mount Everest had finally been scaled was beamed to the whole world on June 1, 1953. It was a historic moment for man. For the British, it marked a moment of great rejoicing. For on that day, Queen Elizabeth II was being crowned as the Empress of Britain. John Hunt and his men had perhaps given her the best gift on the occasion.

The success of the British team came as a big moral booster to mountaineers, all around the globe. Improved equipment, developed specially to help the mountaineers withstand the dangers of the Himalayas, made the task of successive expeditions relatively less hazardous. The first Indian Expedition under Commander M.S. Kohli scaled the Everest on May 20, 1965. Nineteen years later, on May 23, 1984, Bachendri Pal became the first Indian woman to stand atop Mount Everest. (Junko Tabei of Japan was the first woman to achieve this feat).

Records are falling like ninepins.

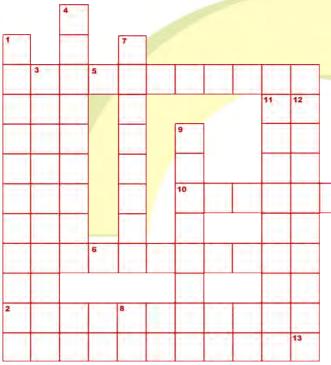
But the news doesn't cheer us. The Himalayan heights are now littered with waste. Empty cartons of food and cans of drinks as also a variety of discarded items dot the scene. It is feared that climate change and the mounting pollution will finally destroy the ecology of the Himalayas and reduce the glory of the mountains, especially of Mount Everest.

If this trend continues, the Everest may end up as a picnic spot. That would mark the devaluation of yet another virgin beauty of nature.

- R.K. Murthi



# PUZZLE DAZZLE PLACES AROUND THE WOR



**BEADS GALORE** 

Reena has a bag of beads to make a necklace. When asked to tell how many beads are in the bag, she said, "I can make sets of 2 beads, 4 beads, and 5 beads and not have any beads left over. When I divide the beads into 9 sets, I'll have 7 beads left over."

What is the least number of beads Reena can have?

- By R Vaasugi

Here is a puzzle on places around the world. The clues given below will help you solve the puzzle. Have fun solving the crossword.

#### Down:

- 1. What V is the smallest country in the world?
- 3. What C was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world?
- 4. What G is the largest island in the world?
- 7. What N is known as the 'Big Apple'?
- 9. What R is the country that covers the largest land area?
- 11. What L is the Middle East country whose capital is Beirut?
- 12. What F is an American state known as the "Orange County"?

#### Across:

- 2. What T is the world's largest city?
- 5. What K is an American state that has given its name to fried chicken?
- 6. What M is the country that has the most people leaving it (emigrating)?
- 8. What O was the place where the first Olympic Games were held?
- 10. What S is the largest desert in the world?
- 13. What Q is a state in Australia? (Reverse)

Test each multiple by dividing by 9 until you get a remainder of 7. are 20 or multiples of 20 (40, 60, 80, and so on). number of beads that can be made into sets of 2, 4, and 5 beads Solution: 20 is the least common multiple of 2, 4, and 5. So, the The least number of beads that Reena can have is 160.

Answers for Beads Galore

9. Russia, 11. Lebanon, 12. Florida. 3. Colossus of Rhodes, 4. Greenland, 7. New York, 13. Queensland. Down: 1. Vatican City, 8. Olympia in Greece, 776 BC, 10. Sahara, Across: 2. Tokyo, 5. Kentucky, 6. Mexico,

Answers for Places around the world:



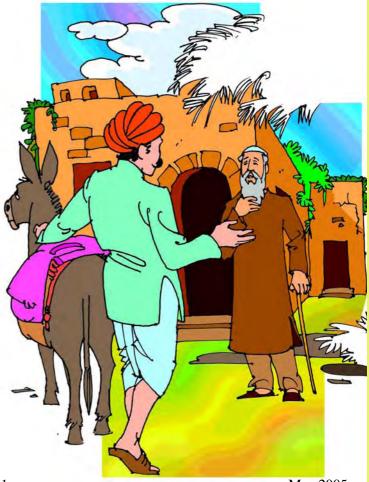
eevansingh was a prosperous trader. He often went to the nearby town to fetch goods for his shop. He took his donkey along with him, though he would not ride on him. One day, he was on his way back to his village with the donkey following him. That day he had been unable to procure many of the items he wanted. As he had roamed the town for a long time, he felt tired and decided to rest for a while. He tied the donkey to a nearby tree and himself lay down beneath a big shaded tree and soon dozed off.

He suddenly woke up on hearing loud chanting by little children. Only then did he notice that a mullah was teaching some children at his home. Now and then he heard him shout at the children for not chanting the verses correctly. He seemed to have ultimately got frustrated when he told them, "What's the fun of my shouting at you? You are all donkeys! I'm trying to make you human beings, but you seem to have taken a vow not to understand me. Go away, all of you, and come back tomorrow after learning how to recite the verses."

Jeevansingh saw the children trooping out silently, but smiling at each other. He now remembered his own childhood when he never went to any school. His school was his father's shop where he learnt how to speak, read and write and understand the intricacies of mathematics. More than all that, his father taught him how to behave with his customers, how to deal with people. So, he had no difficulty in taking over the business when his father passed away and managing the affairs of his shop. But for the first time in his life, he thought, here was someone who was trying to convert donkeys into men! And he had a donkey who was good-for-nothing except to carry

loads of whatever ware he bought in the market. Probably, the donkey did not need any intelligence to do that one job and obey his commands to walk in front or follow him. He decided to meet the mullah.

The mullah, with a venerable-looking beard which was neither black nor grey but mostly white with patches of red here and there, was amused when Jeevansingh made his request to turn his donkey into a man! He laughed aloud as the trader recounted all that he heard



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while he was resting under the tree. The mullah found him earnest in his plea and he did not wish to disappoint him. "All right," said he, "leave the animal here and give me money to feed him for three months. I shall try my best, and you may take him away after that."

Jeevansingh handed part of the money that he had not spent in the market, relieved the donkey of the load, heaved it on to his own back and left, thanking the mullah for agreeing to his request. The clever mullah's plan was to retain the donkey with him as the animal would be useful to him, till the trader came to claim it. After all, he would not have to spend any of his own money for his food.

At the end of three months, Jeevansingh promptly arrived at the mullah's residence with all expectations of finding a strong and sturdy youth waiting for him. The mullah greeted him with a beaming smile. "Your donkey was beyond my expectations. While he learnt to chant



the verses of the *Koran*, he slowly turned into a handsome youth. The chieftain of the next village had died and they were looking for a person who could take his place. They could not find anyone in the village itself capable of holding that post. They came to seek my advice and I recommended the donkey-turned-young man, because I was very confident of his learning and ability. The elders of the village were grateful to me. They thanked me profusely and took the youth away. I'm sure you're happy to learn how lucky your donkey was."

Jeevansingh, of course, was very happy. However, he suddenly began missing his donkey. He realised he would have been happier if he himself had the services of an intelligent young man who could have helped him in his business. He then decided to go to the neighbouring village and meet him. He straight away went there and sought the chieftain's residence.

He was at that time holding a meeting with the elders in the village. Jeevansingh thought the chieftain was not that handsome nor young as the mullah had described. But he sure appeared intelligent from the way he decided the problems besetting the village. When the meeting came to an end, Jeevansingh approached him and greeted him. "Don't you remember me, you fellow? I'm your master; I had left you with the learned mullah!"

The chieftain, fortunately, did not take exception to the way this stranger had greeted him. He courteously said, "Sir, I'm the chieftain of this village. I don't understand what you're saying and how you were my master." He did not miss noticing how the elders of the villagers were looking at each other and alternatively at the stranger with curiosity.

Jeevansingh then narrated all that happened three months ago and his meeting with the mullah that very morning. The chieftain had a hearty laugh on hearing that according to the trader, he was once his donkey! He did not take it amiss; instead he thought he should take the joke further for the sake of the simpleton. "My good friend," he said taking Jeevansingh's hands into his, "the mullah was mistaken when he told you that he had sent your donkey to be the chieftain here. In fact, it is the fakir, who is the chief of the various religious groups. You must go and see him."

The trader now went in search of the fakir. He

saw him at his prayers on the banks of the river. Jeevansingh waited till he got up and walked up to him. "Don't you remember the mullah of the neighbouring village who taught you the verses in the holy book? He had thus converted you as a fakir. Before that you were a donkey—my donkey— and I was your master."

"I was a donkey? What's all this I hear!" protested the fakir. "I don't know any mullah, and I learnt the verses in the holy book in a madrasa. By the way,

are you in your senses?" queried the fakir who had by now raised his voice. "I think you're

under some hallucination. I've some magic powers and I may be able to cure you, but before that you must tell me all about your donkey!"

Jeevansingh, who at one time was expecting blows like the ones he might have given his donkey, stood pacified to see that the fakir had mellowed down. So, he began his narration and ensured that he did not leave out any details, lest the magic promised by the fakir proved not effective. He started hoping against hopes that the fakir's magic would ultimately result in himself turning a donkey, who would recognise him as his former master.

The fakir had by now sat down, eyes closed. Jeevansingh, too, sat down facing him, with bated breath. The fakir slowly opened his eyes and said, "My good friend, when someone shows signs of bravery, we call him a lion. When anyone appears clever, we sometimes call him a rogue. Why, we may even call him a fox! But we know very well that the brave one is not really a lion, nor is the clever one a fox. But when we express our

feelings that way, people are able to understand us better. Similarly, when the mullah found the children slow in grasping what he taught, preferred to call them donkeys, though in the heart of his heart he wished he could convert the little 'donkeys' into intelligent men. The mullah cannot be blamed. I'm also not blaming you for expecting him to convert your donkey into a man. Go back to the mullah, and I won't be surprised if you find the donkey in his backyard. You've my blessings!"

"Thank you, O revered one," said Jeevansingh as he got up. "Today I've learnt some lessons for the first time in my life. I shall straight away go to the mullah and claim my donkey. I can't spare my animal even though he might have a blank brain."

Just as the fakir had guessed, the donkey was in the backyard of the mullah's residence. There was no sign of the mullah; so Jeevansingh untied the donkey and led him back to his own residence. The trader, as was his practice, avoided riding his donkey that day though there was no load for him to carry.

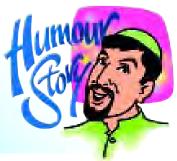
At the court of King Louis XIV of France, prestige was measured by the height of the chair one was allowed to sit in! Only the king and queen could sit in chairs with arms.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Bricks are the oldest manufactured building material still in use. The Egyptians used them over 7,000 years ago.



# When Rasruddin spoke without a word



asruddin was sitting on his bed, chin buried in his cupped palms. He looked worried. He had valid reason for putting on a long face. He had a house to live in and a donkey to cart him around. But his coin box was nearly empty. All that he had were two *Shekels*. How far could two *Shekels* take a family of two? At best, it could fetch a few eggs or a stale loaf of bread.

"This is the time to beg, borrow or steal." A cliché escaped his lips. He didn't realise he had spoken out rather aloud and his wife had heard him.

"You won't steal, for sure. You know what happens if you are caught in the act. Your limbs will be chopped off. Why, even your head might go on the chopper. I know you ought to get it on the neck for not seeking a regular job. You're clever, people say. What is the use of being clever if one fails to earn enough to live in comfort? Even dimwits are now royal courtiers, yet, my man, with more brains than he needs, is left without a regular income," she started lamenting her fate.

"Then let's beg or borrow," Nasruddin interrupted her, eager to put an end to her wails.

"Who will lend us money? Moneylenders happily lend money to the rich who find themselves in need temporarily. Never to those whose incomes are unsteady," she gave him a sermon.

This discussion might have continued but for a knock on the door. "Who comes calling in early in the morning?" Nasruddin said loudly.

His wife walked up to the door. He thanked his stars. It was a timely knock. For whatever her faults, his wife never criticized him in the presence of others. So the caller today, Nasruddin told himself, was most welcome.

She held the door to one side and let the caller, a messenger from the royal court of the Caliph, enter.

"Salaam alai kum," the caller bowed his head, politely.

"Alai kum asalaam," Nasruddin responded.

The messenger pulled out a scroll held in a bag slung over his shoulder and handed it to Nasruddin. Quickly Nasruddin unrolled the scroll and read the message. He could not believe himself. The scroll said he had been appointed a Mulla at the mosque in Najaf. The post carried a regular salary, too.

"Allah be praised!" the Mulla threw his hands skywards and took the name of the Lord.

His wife wondered what made him remember Allah suddenly. She wished she could find out the reason right away. But she held herself back. No woman sought information from her husband in the presence of strangers.

"Allah be praised! May He bless the Great and Noble Caliph with long life and all happiness! Go and tell the Great Sire that his *ghulam* is ever ready to carry out his



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orders. I shall be on the way to Najaf by sunrise tomorrow." He sent back the messenger with a polite nod.

"You're not going alone," his wife groaned.

"Who said anything about leaving you behind? You are my shadow," he joked.

"Shadow, my foot! *You* are my shadow. You have been after me since the time I was an attractive young girl," she scowled.

"Cheer up, my dear. The Caliph wants me to be the preacher in the neighbouring town of Najaf. I will get two hundred *Shekels* every month," he put the scroll aside.

"Allah be praised! Now you won't have to steal." It was now her turn to thank the powers that be.

The couple set out for the town early in the morning. They took turns to ride the donkey. The donkey, alas, got no relief. The Mulla rode it for an hour; and his wife walked behind. When he got off, the mistress sat on its back; and Nasruddin walked behind.

It was a long trek. By dusk the couple reached the town. Need it be said that the donkey was most relieved on reaching the destination!

The couple spent the night at an inn. Next day they rented out a place to live.

"Nasruddin is our new Mulla," the news spread to every home by word of mouth. There were enough mouths to take the news around fast.

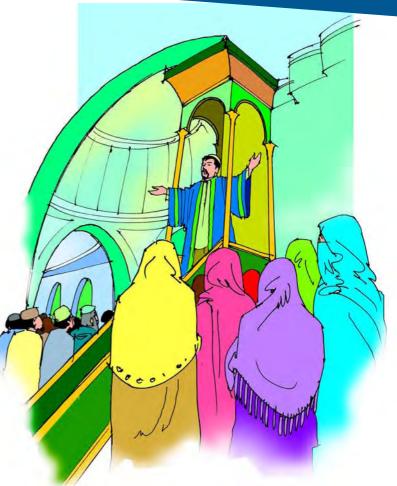
Almost everyone who could make it gathered at the mosque on Friday morning.

The Mulla was there, dressed in flowing robes. He had a cap on his head. He stood at the pulpit. People walked in. Women took their seats in a separate enclosure to the Mulla's left. The men sat on his right. Soon every seat was occupied. People now sat on the floor, or stood ringing the seats.

"Allah ho Akbar!" the Mulla raised his voice, hailing the Master. The people echoed the call. Thrice did he call. Thrice did the people respond with enthusiasm.

"May Allah be praised! We owe our all to His Mercy. And merciful are the ways of the Lord!" Nasruddin chose his words very carefully.

"How wise are his words!" one of the men whispered in the ears of one who sat by his side.



"He is one of the wisest men in the land. But he is also very shrewd," the second man turned on hearing the clear voice of the Mulla.

"I want to speak to you on . . . ," he paused, noticed that all eyes were on him and resumed, "I hope you know what the subject of my sermon today will be."

"No," said one of the elders who sat in the front row.

"Not me, either," said a second man.

Soon the entire audience picked up the response. "No" they said in one voice.

"I never thought that I would have to address a group of people, not one of whom knows what I shall be talking about. That won't do, my friends. Take a week's time. Come back after you revise the *Koran* and the *Shariat*. Then I will take up the first sermon." He came down on his knees, raised his hands skywards, closed his eyes and remained in a pose of meditation.

The people, too, sat with heads bent, praying to God till the Mulla stood up and raised his hand in blessing.

They bowed to him and slowly made for the exit. Friday came again (it always does). Nasruddin headed for the mosque. He had to deliver a sermon. But he did not like to speak from the pulpit. He could speak to men, sitting with them, on the ground. He could entertain them, cut jokes, make them laugh or think. But talking down to them from a raised platform! Well, he hated doing that. Humans, he believed, were not cattle. They should think on their own, not be talked down to.

Nasruddin took his place on the pulpit. People streamed in. Soon the hall filled up.

"Allah ho Akbar!" Mulla Nasruddin raised his voice, hailing the Master. The people echoed the call. Thrice did he call. Thrice did the people respond with enthusiasm.

"May Allah be praised! We owe our all to His Mercy. And merciful are the ways of the Lord! I want to speak to you today on . . . ," he paused. All eyes were on him.

"I hope you know what the subject of my sermon today will be," Nasruddin let his eyes hover over the large audience.

"Yes," said one of the elders who sat in the front row.

"Yes!" said a second man.

Soon the entire audience picked up the response.

"Yes," they said in one voice.

"Good. Since you know all about the topic of my sermon today, why should I waste your time and my time?" He came down on his knees, raised his hands skywards, closed his eyes and remained in a pose of meditation.

The people too sat with heads bent, praying to God till the Mulla stood up and raised his hand in blessing. They bowed to him and slowly made for the exit.

"Twice we have met here to listen to his sermon. And on both occasions he spoke not a word of the sermon he is

paid to deliver," said one of the young men, who by nature was a little doubtful of strangers. For him Mulla Nasruddin was a total stranger.

"That's true. But we won't let him get away. Next week, we will make it impossible for him to get away without delivering the sermon," an old man, known to be wise in the ways of the world, assured the young man.

Next Friday, the people gathered at the hall.

"Allah ho Akbar!" Mulla Nasruddin raised his voice, hailing the Master. The people echoed the call. Thrice did he call. Thrice did the people respond with enthusiasm.

"May Allah be praised! We owe our all to His Mercy. And merciful are the ways of the Lord! I want to speak to you on . . . ," he paused.

Everyone sat up.

"I hope you know what the subject of my sermon today will be," Nasruddin let his eyes hover over the large audience.

"Yes," said half the crowd.

"No!" screamed the other half of the audience.

 $\hbox{``That sounds very interesting,'' Mulla Nasruddin}\\$ 

smiled at the crowd, before adding, "I think it would be a good idea if those who know what I have to say today share the knowledge with those who don't know." He quickly came down on his knees, raised his hands skywards, closed his eyes and remained in a pose of meditation.

The people, too, sat with heads bent, praying to God till the Mulla stood up and raised his hand in blessing. They bowed to him and slowly made for the exit.

For the third time, in succession, he went off without saying a word.

Did he deliver the sermon on the subsequent Friday? Why should we bother?

- R.K. Murthi

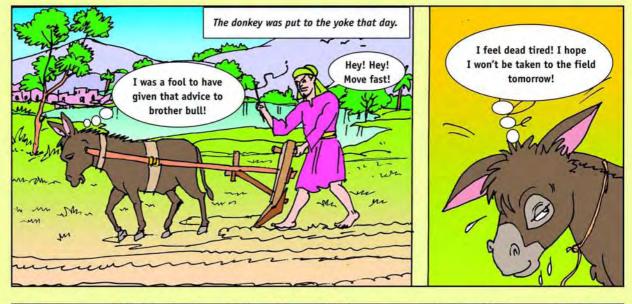






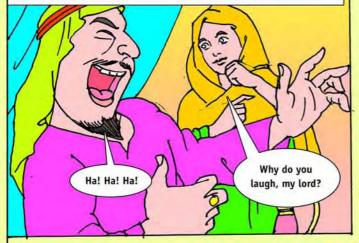








As usual, the merchant overheard the conversation between the bull and donkey. He was amused. At dinner time, he could not control his laughter.

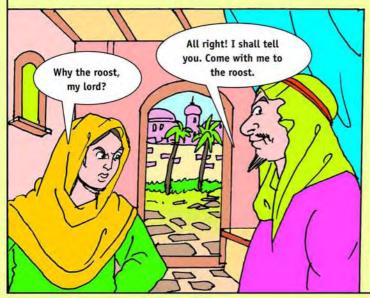




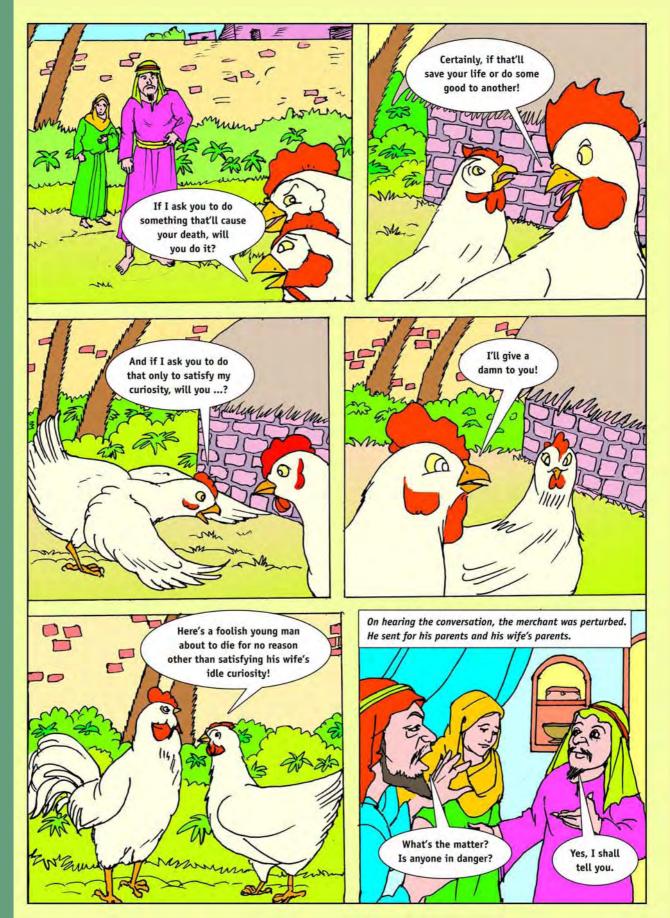
If it is such a secret that you can't tell me, then, I shall stop talking to you. That's all!

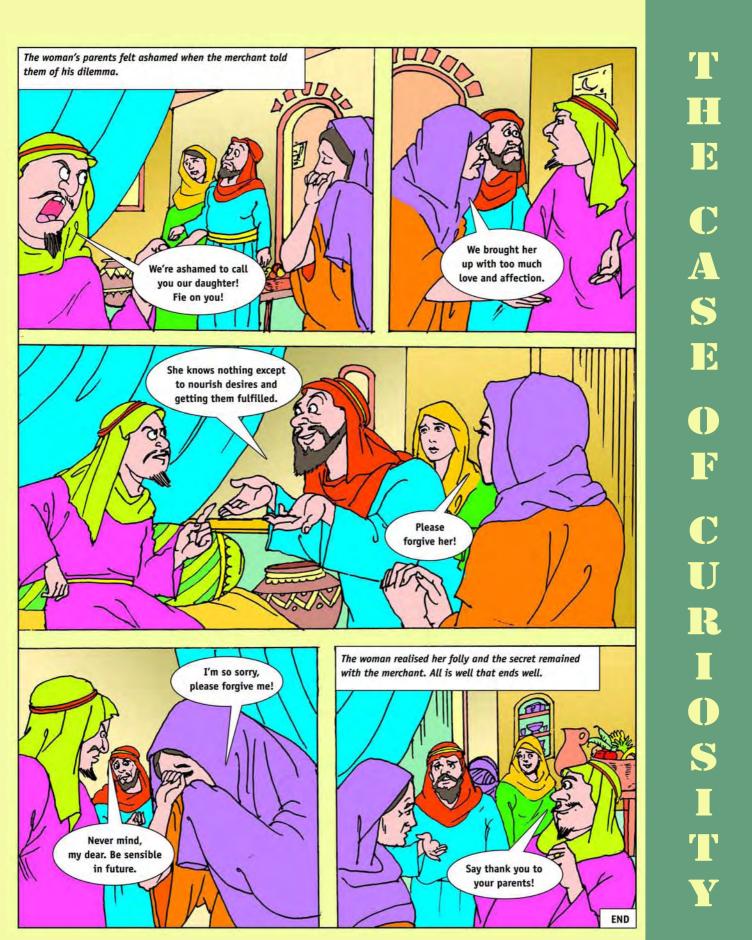












## READ AND REACT

# A NOVEL CONTEST FOR READERS CASH PRIME OF RS. 250 FOR THE BEST ENTRY

#### Read the story below:

A notorious miser had some business to attend to in the town. He asked his teenaged son to accompany him. "We shall engage a vehicle to go to the town," said the father, "but we must bargain."

Soon a cab came their way. They stopped the vehicle and the miser asked, "How much will you charge for taking us to the town?"

The driver wanted ten rupees. The miser sent him away.

A while later, another cab came and he asked the fare. The driver said, "Fifteen rupees, sir." The miser sent him away, too. A third vehicle was stopped by them and the driver said, "Twenty rupees." The miser let that vehicle also go away.

The son was surprised. "Why did you send him away?" the youngster asked.

Now, consider the following points:

- ♦ Why did the miser send away all three vehicles?
- Ultimately how did the father and son reach the town?

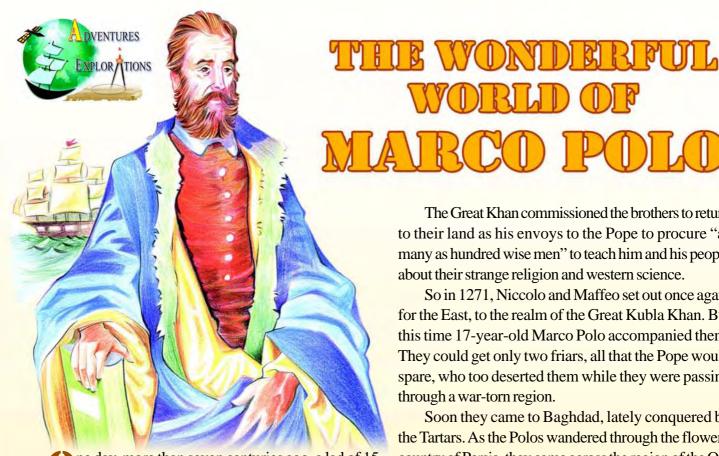
Write down your answer in not more than 150 words, give a title to your entry, and mail it to us along with the coupon below in an envelope marked "Read and React".



LOSING DATE: May 31, 2003
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Class
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ne day, more than seven centuries ago, a lad of 15 named Marco Polo stood on the shore straining his eyes towards the distant horizon. He was eagerly waiting for the arrival of a ship that carried his dear father. The boy had never seen him. How could he? His father, Niccolo Polo and uncle Maffeo Polo, good merchants and great travellers, had left for the far eastern lands, just before Marco was born in Venice in the year 1254.

Soon the vessel arrived in April 1269 and a tall, handsome man alighted from it. He saw a boy who had features like him standing down below.

"Marco! My dear son!" he exclaimed.

"Father!" joyfully cried Marco and ran into his outstretched arms.

Brothers Niccolo Polo and Maffeo Polo had the rare quality of quest and, as good traders, they knew very well that abundant wealth lay in the domains of the Mongols in the far eastern countries. This had led them to Bukhara. where chance brought them upon Kubla Khan's envoys. The glory of the Great Khan lured them to his legendary capital Cathay (in ancient China). Kubla Khan himself greeted them with lavish entertainment and hospitality, for they were the first Europeans to visit his court.

The Great Khan commissioned the brothers to return to their land as his envoys to the Pope to procure "as many as hundred wise men" to teach him and his people about their strange religion and western science.

WORLD (

So in 1271, Niccolo and Maffeo set out once again for the East, to the realm of the Great Kubla Khan. But this time 17-year-old Marco Polo accompanied them. They could get only two friars, all that the Pope would spare, who too deserted them while they were passing through a war-torn region.

Soon they came to Baghdad, lately conquered by the Tartars. As the Polos wandered through the flowery country of Persia, they came across the region of the Old Man of the Mountain. He was terror personified. He had built an enchanting palace. Within it danced beautiful damsels and around it gurgled streamlets of wine. "Would you like to experience paradise for a while?" he would ask any strong youth that passed by. The young man would naturally agree to give a try to the offer. Who would not?

Then the Old Man would entertain the youth with a special drink. At once the youth would swoon and he would be carried into the palace. When he got back his senses, he would find himself in the very heart of paradise! After some days of frolic and merriment there, he would be again brought back to the Old Man's presence for being treated with the same drink. Then he would readily and happily offer himself to the service of the Old Man in order to gain a permanent place in paradise after death. Thus, the Old Man of the Mountain had raised a huge army till his so-called paradise was invaded by the Tartars.

But the most exciting tale the Polos heard was about the men of magic. There was a fearful clan of robbers who had strange powers. They could create dense fogs of dust to cover their attacks on travellers. This gang was said to carry the whirlwind along with them. In fact, they had mastered the swiftness to gallop with the whirlwind, while the whirlwind followed its natural course. In this manner, while they rushed into villages and towns, which they burned and plundered, they gave the impression that they had the amazing command over the course of the whirlwind.

Not before long the caravan passed through the sinister Desert of Lop. They had scarcely gone a mile when Marco Polo heard strange noises. They sounded like distant music, then like the beating of drums. *Rattat-tat-tat! Bong! Bong!* Suddenly there came the sound of gushing wind which created a wild and uncanny atmosphere.

To everyone's amazement the swishing wind began to call the name of Marco Polo's horse. "Shiraz! Shiraz! Shiraz!" Wherefrom came the ghostly music? Who was calling the horse's name? Was it a naughty spirit trying to deceive innocent strangers? The dangerous trip continued.

Probably the noises were made by the strange currents of air playing on the sand formations.

They now reached the plateau of Pamir, considered the highest place in the world. Beyond the mountains lay a desert and beyond the desert lay Cathay, their destination. They passed through Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan. They saw lands with mines of rubies and encountered many more thrilling adventures. Soon they were passing before an interesting looking building on the borders of the Great Khan's country.

It was one of the ten thousand post houses in the territory of Kubla Khan. A post house was situated on every important thoroughfare at distances of about 30 miles. Each of them was provided with 400 fine horses kept in readiness for the use of royal messengers.

After covering about 7,500 miles in more than three and a half years, the Polos reached Shangdu (or Xanadu) and were ushered into the presence of the illustrious Kubla Khan. He sat on his golden throne inlaid with precious stones. He was dressed in a silken robe embroidered with rubies and pearls. The three Venetians gracefully bowed to him.

"Rise, my old friends," ordered the Great Khan. Then

looking kindly at Marco he asked, "Who is this young handsome lad?"

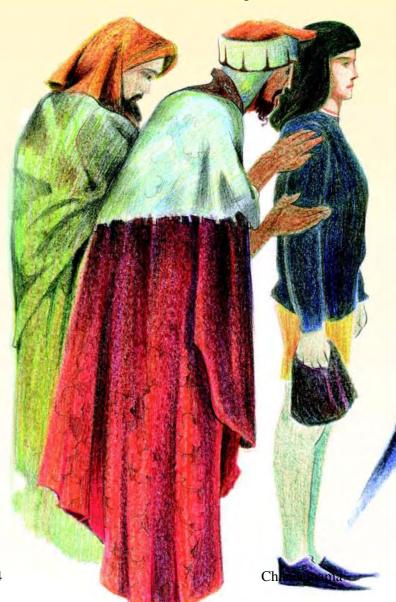
"He is my son, Marco Polo," replied Niccolo proudly.

"He is then heartily welcome and shall be enrolled among my attendants of honour," declared Kubla Khan.

Marco Polo simply marvelled at the palace and the new city of the great emperor. He described them as the most magnificent city in the world and "the greatest palace that ever was".

This splendid domed palace provided fabulous entertainment and was a veritable wonderland. Bucks, boars, tags and bears were maintained for trained leopards and lions to pounce upon them for sport. Twenty thousand soldiers escorted the Great Khan on hunting expeditions.

When Kubla Khan went on a warpath to a distant



province to crush a conspiracy, his seat was prepared on the backs of four elephants put side by side. The rebel governor was captured and was rolled up in silken sheets. Then he was given violent convulsions and shocks till he breathed his last.

Soon Marco Polo became the favourite of the monarch. He was also very popular among the people of the kingdom who affectionately called him the noble Venetian. He was a gifted linguist and could fluently speak four languages. One day, Kubla Khan summoned him and appointed him the Imperial Commissioner and the Governor of Yangchow.

He visited several neighbouring states and introduced Koryo to the western world as "Coree" or "Korea". He spoke for the first time to Europe of a civilized "Zipangu", (Japan), Java, Burma, Laos and Siam. He even visited India – but that was on his return voyage - and revealed in the following manner the facts of the mysterious East, of Maabar (Malabar): "Sailing westwards for about

60 miles from Ceylon, one arrives in the great province of Maabar...You take it for a fact that it is the richest and the most splendid province in the world."

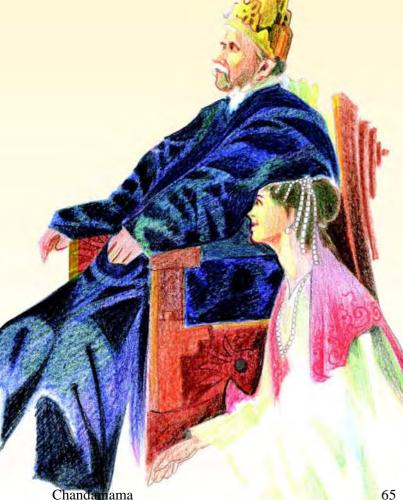
Marco Polo was fascinated when he saw paper substituting gold and silver. "With these pieces of paper they can buy anything and pay for anything. And I tell you that the papers that reckon ten *bezants* do not weigh one." He attributed the success of paper money, which was still unknown in Europe, to Kubla Khan. He wondered at "stones that burned like logs" when he saw coal being abundantly used in the realm.

It so happened that one day some envoys arrived to procure a Mongol princess to be the wife of Arghun Khan, the ruler of Persia. A princess named Kakuchin, still in her teens, was chosen. It was decided that a sea voyage would be undertaken and the emissaries requested the experienced Polos to accompany them. Kubla Khan very reluctantly agreed to spare them for the assignment.

So with 14 ships and over a thousand men and women, they proceeded towards India, with halts at Java, Sumatra and Ceylon. The expedition took almost two years, and dreadful was the journey. Six hundred people perished on the way and on reaching their destination they found to their amazement that the prospective bridegroom had died, two years earlier, simply out of old age. However, Arghun's son, Prince Ghazan consented to marry the princess. Thus ended what is known as the longest and the most remarkable marital expedition.

It was in the winter of 1295 that the Polos finally arrived in Venice. No one at first could recognise them, but later they did so after the three displayed the sumptuous wealth they had brought home. Soon there was a war between Genoa and Venice. The Venetians were defeated and Marco Polo was taken prisoner. In the prison, a writer named Rustichello took faithful dictation from him of his exploits and adventures and gave a permanent form to them which came to be known as 'The Travels of Marco Polo'.

When Marco Polo was on his death bed in 1324, a priest is said to have entered his room and asked if he would admit that his stories were all false. Marco said with a faint smile, "I haven't told half of what I saw!" - (A.K.D.)



May 2005

anu the Neem tree was watching silently from outside the window. His close friend Mr.Mani was sitting in his favourite chair, near the window. Mr.Mani's son Badri was talking to him quietly. Nanu bent his branches low to overhear what Badri was saying.

Mr.Mani said, "No, no, you can't do it. This is where your mother and I have lived for so long. You were born here. How then can you think of selling this house?"

Badri said, "Dad, please try to understand. You're getting older now. I live in America. You're unable to take care of the house any longer. My friend wants to build a shopping mall. Let's sell this place to him and buy a flat. You'll have lots of friends then."

Mr.Mani did not answer. He turned and looked at his friend Nanu. Nanu could see the tears in his friend's eyes. He wanted to console Mr.Mani.

Mr.Mani said "Badri, how can you do this to our home? Your mother is no more, I'll become very lonely without my friends. I cannot live in a small flat."

### FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY

Badri asked, "Your friends? Tell me who your friends are. I'll talk to them."

"My best friends are Nanu, Maria, Gani and Banna. Banna is the oldest one. I've so many other friends near me."

Badri said, "Give me their phone numbers. I'll talk to them myself."

Nanu laughed aloud. 'As if trees need telephones! Ha-Ha-Ha.' Mr.Mani smiled sadly and said, "They don't have telephones. Some of them are much older than I."

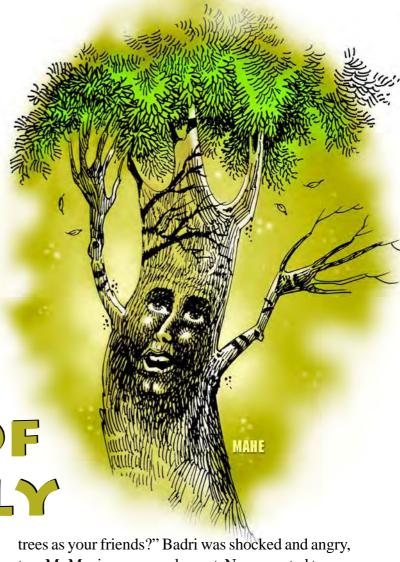
Badri said, "Please Dad, let me talk to them."

Mr.Mani said firmly, "You can't talk to them. You don't speak their language."

Badri was confused. He asked, "Are they foreigners? Let me try, Dad."

"No, my son. They're very much Indians. They are the trees is our garden."

"What! Dad, have you gone mad? You're calling



trees as your friends?" Badri was shocked and angry, too. Mr.Mani was very adamant. Nanu wanted to say, 'Don't fight with your son because of me.' But he heard Badri shouting at his father.

"Dad, you've gone mad for sure, calling some trees as your friends! It's time I sold this house and took you with me to the USA," said Badri and left the room.

Nanu slowly peeped into the room. 'Hey, Mani, I heard everything. Both of you were speaking so loud.' Mr.Mani said, "Oh! It's all right, old chap. He's a young man. He can't understand you at all."

Nanu said, brushing his soft leaves against Mr.Mani's cheeks, 'Don't worry, my friend. I'm sure one day he'll understand.' Mr.Mani asked, "Nanu, did you hear about the Shopping Mall? No way, sir! As if I'll allow such a thing in my home!"

'There, there, you should not get agitated. You've BP and you'll only fall ill. Then who's there to protect us?' said Nanu kindly. Mr.Mani sighed and said, "You're right, I suppose. Tell me Nanu, don't you trees fight with your children?" Nanu said, 'Of course we do. When our children grow up, they don't leave us and go to America. We don't push our parents and grand parents away. Have you seen our Banna, the Banyan Tree, the luckiest one? All his children and grandchildren protect him by forming drooping roots around him.'

"Good Morning, Grandpa," Vikram came running into the room and hugged his grandfather.

"Good morning, Vikki." Mr.Mani kissed his grandson.

"Grandpa, I'm a big boy now. Mom says I should not be cuddled any more," said Vikram.

Mr.Mani laughed and said, "No matter how old you are, you'll always be a child to me."

Vikram thought for some time and asked, "What if I grow older with a big moustache?"

'You'll always be our boy, no matter how old you are!' said Nanu from the window.

Vikram looked around and asked, "Who's speaking, Grandpa? It's not your voice."

Mr.Mani was very happy. He asked Vikki, "Can you hear that voice? Are you sure?" Vikram nodded.

Mr.Mani shouted, "Did you see that Nanu, Banna, Gani? My Vikki can understand you people. Isn't it wonderful? Oh, thank God for that!" Nanu laughed and said, 'Wait till I tell this to all our friends. They'll be so happy.'

"Grandpa, I want to meet all your friends," said Vikram. Mr.Mani introduced his grandson to all his old friends in the garden.

Vikram spoke to all of them. He liked Maria very much. He said, "I love you, Maria. You're like my grandmother." Maria smiled and said, 'Oh! How nice it is to be compared to that wonderful lady! She used to take care of us so well.'

The squirrels on the mango tree said, 'She was a wise lady, too. She used to make the gardener pluck the fruits that we had nibbled. She knew very well that these fruits were the sweetest.' Maria nodded and said, 'Yes, she used to make yummy dishes out of my mangoes.' The crows said, 'Every day she used give

us cooked rice, ghee and dhall. How tasty it was!' The doves said, 'Such a wonderful lady! She used to give us rice every day on the roof.'

"Can't you do all these things that Grandma used to do?" Vikram asked his grandfather. Mr.Mani said, "I can't cook. Now I'm too old to climb on to the roof." Maria said, 'Poor man. Now he has to leave all of us and go elsewhere.'

Vikram was shocked. "Grandpa, where are you going?"

Nanu said, 'Oh Maria! Can't you keep quiet? You women never keep a secret. You had no right to talk about their family matters.' Maria swayed her branches with anger. She said, 'You men! Don't you dare talk about women like this. I just wanted Vikki to know, that's all.'

Gani the Guava tree, the wisest of them all, said, 'OK, folks, no more fights. Now that the whole secret is out, let Vikki know what had happened.' He told Vikki everything.

Vikram was very sad. He said, "Grandpa, don't worry. I'll take care of this problem."

The next day, two builders had come to inspect the place. Badri was talking to them in the garden. The trees watched quietly. Vikram was playing nearby. One of the



builders said, "You've too many trees. We'll have to remove them." Badri asked, "Can't you save these trees somehow? My father is very fond of them."

The builders measured once again with their tapes. They said, "Sorry, sir, we'll have to remove them."

That night, Vikram asked, "Dad, why are the tree being removed?" Mr.Badri explained everything. Vikki said, "I don't want to come to America. I'll stay with Grandpa."

"Vikki, that's not possible. He's too old to take care of you," said his mother.

"Please Dad, listen to me. I'll not leave my old Grandfather and go with you. I want to take care of him. I'm not like you people, I'm like the trees. Did you see the Banyan tree! How his children, the drooping roots, protect him! Did you watch the Plantain tree? She is surrounded by her children. The trees never leave their parents and go away. I want to be like them, when you grow old, like Grandpa."

Both Badri and his wife were stunned. She said, "Our Vikki is right. We're setting a bad example by our behaviour. We should change our plans and stay here with your father." Vikki ran to the garden. He hugged each one of his friends and said, "I've won! They won't sell the house!"

Banna said, 'I'm not so sure. Your father is still arguing.' Vikki laughed, "Oh, that's no problem. My father never wins an argument and my mother never looses one." All of them laughed.



The next day, Mr.Mani was happy when Badri said, "Dad, you're right. I've decided not to sell this house. I've another news for you. Wearen't going back to America. We'll stay together."

Mr.Mani and Vikram visit their friends in the garden every day. Vikram learn wise things from them.

- Kanthalakshmi Chandramouli

### **ARREARS**

Kamala Devi, a sweet old lady, would visit the temple every Friday. On coming out, it was her custom to give fifty paise to a scrawny beggar who could always be found sitting just outside the temple gate.

Once, it so happened that Kamala Devi went to visit her son who lived in Mumbai, and did not return for a whole month. The day after her return happened to be a Friday. That evening, she made her usual visit to the temple. As she came out, she was accosted by the indignant beggar.

"Lady," he said reproachfully, "you owe me two rupees!"

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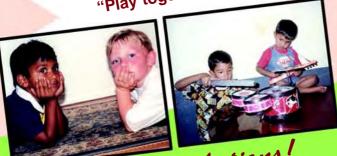


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### **BEAUTY FROM WASTE**

Sonia Khanna's roses have won the First Prize at the Flower Show. The enormous, magnificent blooms in red, yellow, and pink leave Veena and her mother spellbound.

"Wow! You sure have magic in your fingers, Sonia," exclaims Veena's mother, a trifle enviously. "Why do my roses never turn out as good as yours, no matter how much care I give them?"

"It's nothing, Radhika," laughs Mrs. Khanna. "I'll let you into my little secret. Come with me!" She gets up and leads the way into her garden. Veena and her mother follow her, intrigued, as she stops before a row of potted plants, all in full bloom. Not just roses, but other flowering plants as well. From another row of pots, little guava and papaya trees and chilli plants greet them.

"What lovely dahlias and lilies, Aunty!" gasps Veena in admiration.

"Thank you. Take a close look at that pot of dahlias," says Mrs. Vhanna. Veena obeys. She sees that the pot contains not just soil, but something else!

"Onion peels...eggshells...Why, this is garbage!" exclaims Veena, wrinkling her nose in disgust.

"Yes, it's garbage," agrees Mrs. Khanna, smiling at her expression. "And very useful garbage, too, because it works for me!"

"Works for you? But how?" asks Veena's mother, while Veena chips in eagerly, "Do tell us, Aunty!"

Mrs. Khanna explains: "Biodegradable kitchen waste, turned into compost, makes an excellent fertiliser. By 'biodegradable waste' I mean vegetable and fruit peels, tea leaves and coffee powder, coconut fibre, eggshells, stale or rotten food. All this can be put to good use to make your plants healthier."

She then explains the process, "It's simple. Take 7 pots containing plants, number them and clear 2 to 3 inches of soil from the top. Take a packet of bio-catalyst, divide the contents in 7 parts and sprinkle them in the pots. Put some water to moisten the soil. On the first day, put 500 gm of waste in the first pot. On the second day, do the same thing with the second pot, and so on. Continue the cycle like this, watering all the plants normally. You will soon find the plants growing very well! And the best part is, the waste will give out no bad smell whatsoever!"

"That's wonderful! I never knew garbage could be so useful," says Veena, and her mother adds, "I'll start following this rightaway. Thanks, Sonia!"



# Bio-degrade the waste and see a lot more greens

Decompose kitchen waste like vegetable cuttings, fruit peel-offs, tea/coffee powder etc. and use it as fertilizer for your plants.



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